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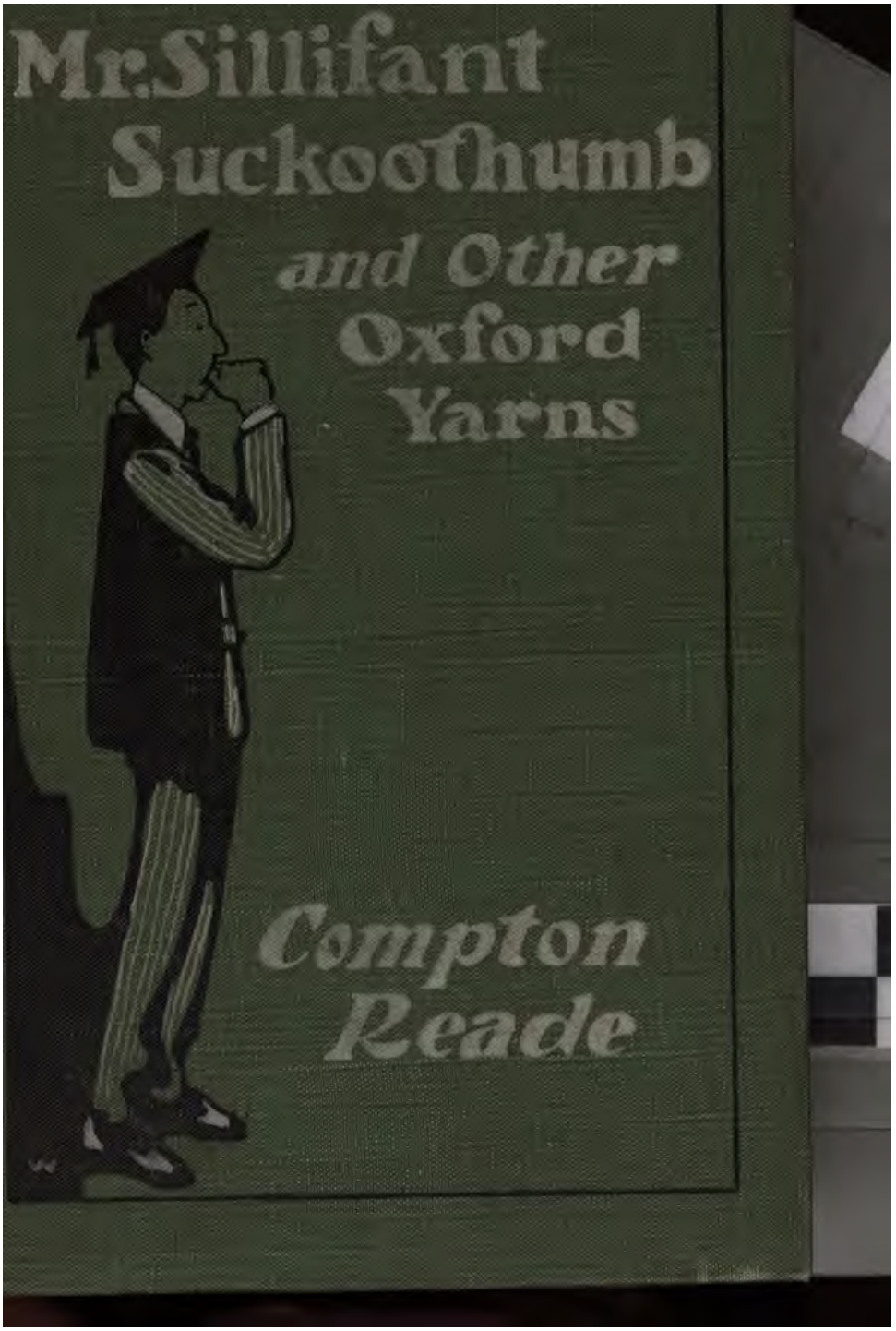
Mr. Sillifant
Suckoothumb
and Other
Oxford
Yarns
Compton
Reade

MR. SILLIFANT SUCKOOTHUMB

AND OTHER OXFORD YARNS

SH
·SPONGE·B·A·

MR. SILLIFANT SUCKOOTHUMB

AND

OTHER OXFORD YARNS

BY

COMPTON READE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY SYDNEY HERRALL

LONDON
R. A. EVERETT & CO. (LTD.)
42 ESSEX STREET, STRAND, W.C.
1904

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TO MRS. JOHN MAXWELL (MISS BRADDON),

IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF

THE GENIAL HOSPITALITY OF LICHFIELD HOUSE

AND OF "THE BELGRAVIA MAGAZINE."

PREFACE

Sitting calmly in judgment on my own handiwork after the lapse of nearly fifty years, in the mood moreover no longer of bright springtime but of the sere and yellow, I can but confess that these caricatures to a more experienced eye seem as garish as Gilray's, and, if possible, more remote from reality. By way of apology, I may perhaps be permitted to plead that, prior to the evolution of Oxford, the fun of the fair was more boisterous, the life of the student less disciplined. *Nos et mutamur ;* so completely that, after so long an interval, I fail to comprehend the ebullience which could have conceived a farrago of fantoccini ; perhaps, were I asked the difference between laughter and tears, I should reply, " about half a century ! "

Looking backwards to the inception of this series, I am able to affirm that no one character was drawn from life, still less designed as the portrait of a contemporary. " *Particulam undique* " formed my canon of composition ; indeed, during the process of revision in the early

seventies, idiosyncrasies, which might have been identified with those of personal friends, were toned down. True, I availed myself of actual incidents, notably the personation of a proctor, but for that very reason drew a portrait totally dissimilar to that of the perpetrator of so daring a practical joke.

Of the sketches included in this volume, "Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb" was requisitioned for a bright little ephemeral, styled *The Boy's Athenæum;* the remainder appeared in *The Belgravia Magazine*, then under the joint management of Mr. John Maxwell (to whose evergreen memory I would pay an affectionate tribute), and of his brilliant and most kindly wife, known to the wide world as Miss Braddon, whom I have to thank very cordially for permission to reprint.

With this preamble, *stultitiam ventis tradam protervis!*

COMPTON READE.

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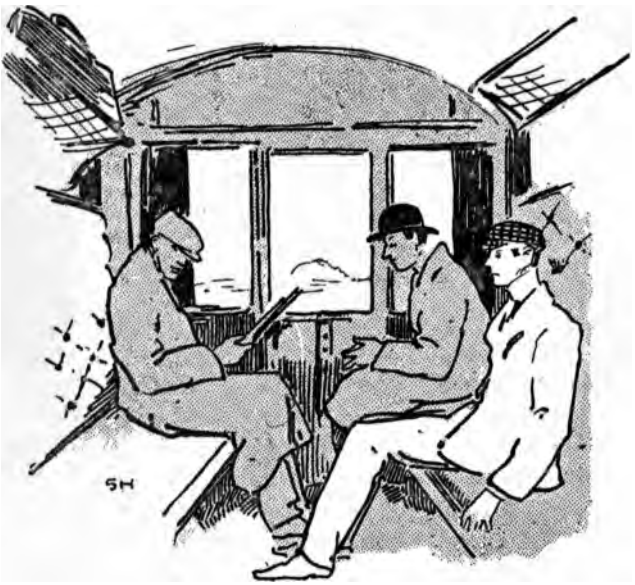
MR. SILLIFANT SUCKOOTHUMB

CHAPTER I

A STORY, like an oyster, must have an opening—at all events before you come to the vinegar and pepper. *Ergo*, let us plunge at once *in medias res*, as the bull remarked to the proprietor of the china shop.

In a first class carriage on the G. W. R., then, you may survey the physiognomies of three *men*. At breakfast time this morning they were *boys*. One was called Tumbuster Senior at Faggington College; the second rejoiced in the nomenclature of Steptoe Primus at Woppleby School; whilst the personage in the corner, who seems as if he could with pleasure hide his face behind the half-yard of curtain allowed by the Company as a preventive against freckles, was addressed—previous to his departure from home—as his grandma's *baby;* and perhaps is the most bonâ fide man of the three, inasmuch as he never was a boy. *This* is Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb.

It is a remarkable fact in natural history that whereas a cat wags her tail in anger, a dog wags his in pleasure. You cannot, therefore, prognosticate, beause an animal wags his tail, whether he is pleased or vexed. Just so with these three *men*. They all wag



—I beg pardon, grin—simultaneously ; but what that facial motion portends, heaven knows. *I* don't. Perhaps they feel nervous.

They ought to, for they are *en route* for Oxford, and the examination papers which

will torture them to-morrow are even now in the press.

After an unbroken silence as far as Slough, Mr. Tumbuster, who is great and magnificent, looks across at Mr. Steptoe, and delivers himself as follows: "Are you going up to matric.?"

Thus addressed, Mr. S. grins broader and broader still. (He is a short and fat man, who has much loved the Woppleby bun shop). Then he answers solemnly, with a depression of his left eyelid, "*Quot homines tot sententiæ!*"

"*Ha! ha!* ve-ve-very good!" laughs Mr. Tumbuster, somewhat taken back by the strangeness of the reply.

"At what college?" inquires Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb, who feels better at the sound of a human voice, and strong enough to essay conversation.

"I'm bound for St. Aldate's!" exclaims Mr. Tumbuster, anticipating Mr. Steptoe's reply. "Does anybody else say the same?"

"How vewy odd!" cries Mr. Suckoothumb, losing all his shyness in a second; "why, so am I!"

"And you, sir?" says Mr. Tumbuster, addressing Mr. Steptoe politely.

"That," answers that gentleman, "is quite a case of *quot homines tot sententiæ*."

"Come, come!" cries Mr. Tumbuster, knowingly, "a joke won't bear repeating! You said that before, didn't you?"

"*Quot homines*—" commences Mr. Steptoe, somewhat vacuously.

"*Quot* rot!" retorts Mr. Tumbuster, half angrily, turning at the same moment to our friend, Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb, and inquiring what school he might hail from.

"I—I—" stammers that individual, the colour somehow magnifying in his pallid cheeks, "I—I nevar went to school. My gwandma doesn't appwove of schools."

"Dear me!" exclaims Mr. Tumbuster, interested, "what a very curious old party your papa's mamma must be!"

"*Tot sententiæ!*" growls Mr. Steptoe from the corner, whereat Mr. Tumbuster laughs in spite of himself.

"My gwandma isn't my papa's but my mamma's mamma. It's all the same, though, of course, you know," murmurs Mr. Suckoothumb mildly.

"Quite so," rejoins Mr. Tumbuster, seriously. "That is, provided she is coiny."

"If you mean wich," remarks the other, "I've weason to believe that she's vewy, vewy wich indeed."

"*That's* your figure!" cries Mr. Tumbuster, cheerily. "Make the old girl shell out!"

"Shell out!" repeats our hero, glancing across nervously at Mr. Steptoe, whose look of vacuity has most surprisingly changed into one of intelligence. "Shell out! I—I don't understand, sir, your meaning. My gwandma isn't an oyster, or a cwab, or, if you come to that, an octopus, but Lady Sillifant, of Sillifant Hall, and I am called after her."

"Well, then," replies Mr. Tumbuster, "Mr. Sillifant Hall—"

"Sillifant Suckoothumb, sir! Sillifant is my Cwistian name, and—"

"All right! I twig—Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb Hall—"

"Hall," interposes our friend, warmly, "is the name of the *house*, not of *me*."

"Dash it! I suppose we shall learn the grammar of your name eventually. However, Mr. Sillythumb Suckoofant—to revert

to the subject of matriculation—I suppose you've read your books ? "

" I've wead two plays of Sophocles and the odes of Howace."

" Is that all ? "

" Th—that's all the Latin and Gweek. My gwandma hired a cuwate to teach me, and I've been gwinding at those blessed books for two years with him."

" My good fellow ! " gushes Mr. Tumbuster, winking across to Mr. Steptoe, who is reading, or affecting to read, a newspaper ; " my good fellow, and do you mean to say you've not mastered the Epistles of Hieronymus Podex ? "

Mr. Suckoothumb, whose eyes express amazement, declares that he has not.

" Nor the Memoranda of Heliogabalus ? Nor the Obols of Belisarius ? "

" I—I've heard of Belisawius—that's all."

" My dear sir," urges Mr. Tumbuster, " your ignorance surprises me ! You'll infallibly be ploughed off the reel ! "

" You d—don't weally think so ? " cries poor Mr. S. S., in genuine alarm. " Because if I agweed with you, I'd weturn to town by the next twain—that I would."

" I wouldn't be rash," observes Mr. Tumbuster, with an air of well feigned seriousness. " I knew a man once who hadn't read

one of those books; in fact, he came up to matriculate, just like yourself, without the advantage of a previous education, yet he managed somehow to do the trick, and no mistake."

"H—how did he manage it? Please tell me, sir! My gwandma would be so tewwibly annoyed at my failure, that I—I quite twemble to contemplate the consequences."

"Quite so. I appreciate your agitation, sir: it does you credit. I too have cause for the deepest anxiety. In fact, my whole future depends upon my luck to-morrow. A fond and affectionate father, sir, has sworn horribly by all his gods that if I don't pass he'll cut me off with elevenpence-three-farthings, all told. Think of that!"

"I'd wather not," responds Mr. S. S., shutting his eyes. "It must be a painful cwisis in your existence. I suppose that you have taken the pwecaution of learning your work by heart?"

"That's it—at least, I flatter myself as regards the Podex I'm all there, as firm as a rock. The Memoranda are at the very tip of my tongue. But in respect of the Obols, sir, I'm weak, decidedly weak."

"You—you haven't told me how your fwiend managed to get thwough without any acquaintance with these books!"

"Simple enough. He went straight to Swat, the senior tutor, and told him he hadn't had time to read them."

"And what did Mr. Swat say to that?"

"Oh! nothing particular. He was riled, of course, and let off the steam in some unknown tongue, Chaldaic or Runic, or something. Language, you know, Talleyrand said, is a medium to hide our thoughts; so the dons, when they want to express themselves forcibly, have recourse to Preadamite dialects."

"But," urges Mr. Suckoothumb, having an eye to the main chance, "if I compwehend you wightly, Mr. Swat did actually let the gentleman thwough after all?"

"Let him through, sir? Most decidedly he did! Fact is, he was gravelled, simply gravelled by the man's candour. Believe me, it's no pleasure for a don to pluck a fellow who goes to him and unreservedly acknowledges his total ignorance. It's like hitting a woman, or shooting a barn-door fowl."

"On that point, sir," grimly interposes Mr. Steptoe from his corner, "I should like to hazard a remark."

"Only too charmed to listen to anything original," replies Mr. Tumbuster, bowing with gracious grandeur.

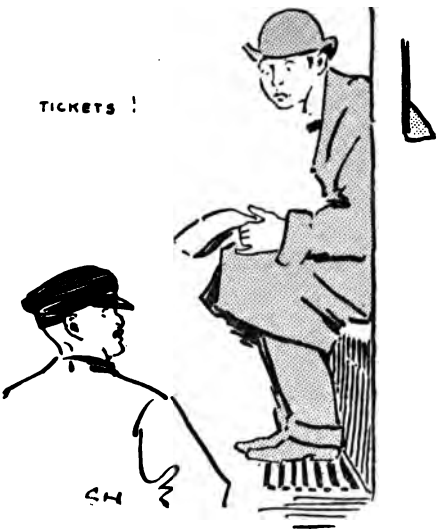
"It isn't exactly original."

"Well, dash it! I don't care what it is, so long as it isn't *Quot homines*, etc., etc."

"Then," coolly observes Mr. Steptoe, "I'll shut up."

"Certainly not!" cries Mr. Tumbuster. "Pray utter."

Mr. Steptoe, however, relapses into the consideration of certain social problems discussed in the leader of the paper before him; whereupon Mr. Tumbuster flushes up wrathfully, and is meditating an observation rather rude than sarcastic, when luckily the train steams steadily into Didcot Station and a collector, swinging open the door of the carriage, demands their tickets.



I'M AFWAID, MAN, THAT THE TICKET'S LOST.

Now Messrs. Tumbuster and Steptoe find no difficulty in extracting theirs. Not so,

however, Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb, whose ticket seems to have taken unto itself wings.

"It's a vewy stwange circumstance," he murmurs, "but my gwandma cautioned me to be careful not to lose my ticket, because my memowy's wather defective. I —I'm afwaid, man, that the ticket's lost. I hope it doesn't make any diffewence."

"Not in the least, sir," answers the official satirically, "provided as you'll pay the fare over again."

"But I can't!" howls Mr. S. S. "My portmanteau's in the van, and my purse is inside it."

The collector appears anything but satisfied by this declaration; in fact, he hints that it would be advisable for the gentleman forthwith to step out and interview the station-master.

In this dilemma Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb, whose lips are blanched with fright, turns for assistance to his travelling acquaintances. Unfortunately, however, for him, Mr. Tumbuster has taken advantage of the halt to make a dash for the refreshment room; he therefore faces boldly Mr. Steptoe.

"Could you, sir," he asks, "lend me thirteen and fourpence? I will wepay you faithfully on our awwival at Oxford."

"That," observes Mr. Steptoe, coolly, "is clearly a case of *Quot homines tot sententiæ*."

At this juncture, however, a youngish, whiskerless individual, in a white tie, pushing aside the collector, enters the carriage in time to ascertain what is the matter.

"Can I be of any assistance?" he inquires, with marked politeness.

"Genelum's lost his ticket, and hasn't got no money," growls the collector, in explanation.

"Evewything I possess," cries Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb, "is locked up in my portmanteau, except—except," feeling in his waistcoat pocket, "a thweepenny-bit, which I kept out to buy a bun, in case I should feel hungwy."

"Pray, pray, sir," says the clerical stranger, with almost an excess of courtesy, "allow me! Thirteen and fourpence. Here you are, collector!"

"I'm vewy, vewy, vewy gwateful!" almost screams Mr. S. S. "Pway permit me to hand you my card, and to ask for yours in weturn."

The clerical gentleman smiles blandly at this desperate gush, and at once concedes his request.

To his infinite surprise, Mr. Suckoothumb reads upon the bit of pasteboard these significant letters :

REV. AUGUSTUS SWAT,

St. Aldate's College,
Oxford.

" B—bless me ! " he exclaims with admirable *naïveté*, " what a wemarkable coincidence ! May I ask, sir, if you're any welation to Mr. Swat, the *tutor* of St. Aldate's ? because I'm going to matwiculate —that is to twy to matwiculate—at that College."

" I have the honour to hold the office of tutor in St. Aldate's," is the reply. Mr. Swat is obviously amused at this ingenuous youth.

Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb for the nonce seems posed. He's not, however, convinced.

" Excuse the liberty I take, but you're not *the* Mr. Swat, the senior tutor, are you ? Because my gwandma told me that the senior tutor was a gwave and venewable

person ; and, pardon me, though you may be gwave, you're not exactly what I should call venewable ! "

"Such as I am, I am," responds Mr. Swat, laughing heartily. "I cannot dichotomise my entity. In fact, sir, I assure you that there is only one Mr. Swat of St. Aldate's, and I am that one."

"Dear me ! " cries Mr. S. S., blushing like a maiden of seventeen, "how vewy awkward ! My gwandma must have weceived ewwoneous information. But as I have had the gwatification of meeting you in this stwange way, perhaps I may be allowed to ask one question about the Matwiculation Examination, sir ? "

MR. SWAT.

Mr. Swat bows, just a little stiffly perhaps.

"Is it within the bounds of possibility for a candidate, who

has only wead his Sophocles and Howace, to get thwough ? "

" I am only too pleased," responds the tutor, " to find a schoolboy who *has* read his Sophocles and Horace."

Mr. Suckoothumb, delighted with this intelligence, looks round to catch the eye of Mr. Tumbuster. That gentleman, however, having spied the tutor, has sheered off judgmatically to another carriage. A not unnatural instinct warns him to avoid a don as he would poison or an old woman.

" Then," continues Mr. S. S., eagerly, " it is not absolutely necessawy for a man to have wead the Obols of Belisawius, for instance ? "

" The *what*, sir ? "

" Oh ! " cries our hero, somewhat taken aback by this sharp interrogatory, " perhaps I've got hold of the wong name ? " Then, turning to Mr. Steptoe, who is shading his countenance from the glances of the dreaded examiner by the protecting newspapers, " Do you wemember, sir, the names of those books which the other gentleman who was in this cawwiage, mentioned ? "

Mr. Steptoe, on being thus addressed, drops the paper, and looks very much as if he were about to broach his pet proverb.

He doesn't, however ; for he mutters

instead, "I don't know. Something about Heliogabalus."

"We don't require history," remarks the tutor glibly.

"It was the Podex of Heliogabalus, I think," observes Mr. S. S., meditatively.

"We can dispense with anatomy," rejoins Mr. Swat.

"And you don't want Obols?" gushes Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb, gleefully.

"You've had a proof of that, I think," replies Mr. Swat, "so far as *I'm* concerned. As for the College, I can assure you that it is sufficiently endowed."

At this reply our young friend feels wholly mystified, and hence, for the remainder of the journey relapses into a thoughtful silence, reflecting that Oxford is a wonderful place, and that Mr. Swat's brain must be uncomfortably overcrowded with Greek particles and Latin idioms.

On the narrow Oxford platform he encounters Mr. Tumbuster, who is simply raging after his luggage.

"I say," he says, clutching that gentleman's arm, "it's all wight."

"What's all right? I can't find *mine*."

"I mean that you needn't know anything about obols, and all that sort of thing.

Swat has just told me so. He has, indeed, upon my vewy honour."

"Oh, bother that!" cries Mr. Tumbuster, testily. "Look here, my good fool, this train goes on to Birmingham in less than a jiffey, and if we don't look sharp, our luggage will be lost."

"Gwacious heavens!" cries Mr. Suckoothumb, "*lost?* Why, that portmanteau contains my *little all!* Hie! porter, inspector, guard, station-master, evewybody, anybody, where's my luggage?"

* * * * *

At six o'clock the same evening a pleasant quartette sit down to a cosy dinner in a cheerful corner of the "Mitre" coffee-room. At the head of the table is planted in solemn dignity Mr. Tumbuster; on his right, Mr. Steptoe; on his left, Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb; and *vis-à-vis*, a live undergraduate of St. Aldate's College, who rejoices in the patronymic of Flygilloway. This individual six months ago, was a dirtyish boy at Faggington College. His raiment now would adorn a Solomon, being very superior in quality to his brains; whilst from his manner you might imagine that he had already acquired, by bitter-sweet experience, an accurate acquaintance with the bye-ways of a naughty world.

"What vewy odd titles they've given to these colleges!" suggests Mr. S. S., as he gurgles down a glass of exhilarating sherry.

"Highly respectable," remarks Mr. Flygilloway drily.

"They seem," continues Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb, "to have taken a lot of names out of the Bible, and a lot more out of the geogwaphy. But what could have induced them to call a college 'Wadham'? It ain't a saint, and it isn't a county."

"Well, you see," replies Mr. Flygilloway, "it was to have been christened after a locality mentioned in Genesis; but they thought the dons wouldn't like it, so they spelt it with a 'we'!"

"How vewy interwesting! I'm fond of antiquities. And what is the meaning of 'All Souls'?"

"That, sir, is because they won't admit nobodies."

"And 'University'? My gwandma told me that a university and a college are two diffewent things. If, then, it is a college it can't be a university, and if it is a university it can't be a college!"

"Pooh!" exclaims Mr. Tumbuster. "That's all you know about it. Just as if Dublin wasn't both."

"My gwandma," observes Mr. S. S.,

meekly, "is a vewy wise woman. But she is getting old, and she evidently makes mistakes now and then."

"In arithmetic, I hope?" politely suggests Mr. Flygilloway.

Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb somehow fails to catch the drift of this sally, and of the laughter which greets it. Modestly putting it down to his own obtuseness, he humbly inquires whether her late Majesty ordered "Queen's" College to be built?

"Undoubtedly," asserts Mr. Flygilloway, "and it was to have been denominated 'Vic,' only that they've called a colony, and a park, and a theatre, and such a host of things after the King's mamma that it was voted tautology, and that would not do, you see, in a place like Oxford."

Not knowing the meaning of the word "tautology," Mr. S. S. begins to think of Oxford sausages, which he discovers to be an excellent accompaniment to a larded capon.

"How vewy, vewy wemarkable!" cries he in the midst of the throes of deglutition, almost oblivious of the sausages in his genuine surprise and sincere admiration of the majesty of learning.

"Rot!" remarks Mr. Steptoe, heavily and incredulously.

"All serene, my good sir," rejoins Mr. Flygilloway. "Ask the waiter—ask anybody, if I am right or wrong."

"*Quot homines tot sententiæ*," growls Mr. Steptoe, first betaking himself with vigour to a marrowbone, and then adroitly depositing the marrow in his lap for the benefit of his tailor.

"There's one other college," observes Mr. S. S., after a solemn pause, devoted to pulled bread and Stilton cheese.

"What's that?" asks Mr. Flygilloway.

"Well," whispers Mr. Suckoothumb, glancing nervously at the waiter, whose ears seem open, "St. Aldate's! What sort of a saint was he?"

"Oh, that's well known," responds Mr. Flygilloway, jauntily. "Aldate was the man who invented chronology. In fact, our senior tutor, Swat, is very particular about dates on that account. So look out for squalls, if you can't spot the birth of Confucius, and the death of Cassivelaunus. He considers it a duty he owes to the pious memory of our founder to pluck every man who can't give an account of St. Paul's journeys. He is examiner in the schools, you know, as well as tutor. However, I'm getting ready for him. I've got a patent shirt."

"A shirt!" cries Mr. Suckoothumb. "What's a shirt got to do with cwonology?"

"Everything in the world. This shirt of mine has the biggest wristbands you ever saw. They would raise envy in the breast of a Sister of Charity."

"But what's the use of them?" inquires Mr. Tumbuster.

"Simply this. No reasonable being can carry dates in his head, along with a pack of other rubbish. So you simply write them on your shirt sleeve, and refer to them at your leisure, when the examiner happens to be sneezing, or anything of that sort. I've got all St. Paul's journeys on this precious shirt. In fact, I call it the Pauline Bradshaw, and I mean to take out a patent for the invention."

"But isn't that cwibbing?" suggests Mr. S. S., blandly enough.

"Rather, my boy."

"I—I don't think I should like to cwib."

"Perhaps you'd rather be ploughed. All right. As our friend, Mr. Steptoe, has it, *Quot homines tot sententiæ*. Here, waiter, I say, bring a bottle of '87, and then we'll just have a squint at the proctor and his dogs. They'll be round in about half an hour."

"Proctor—dogs!"

"Yes, sir. The proctor is an officer of this University, who can take up and commit to prison without trial, any one who happens to offend him. So you must be careful—he's dangerous."

"But what does he want with dogs? Are they bloodhounds?"

"Most sanguinary, I assure you," responds Mr. Flygilloway. "Bite like the deuce. They've been known at a whistle from the proctor to run an unoffending man for miles out in the country. We call that rusticating. Perhaps the term is strange to you?"

"Evewything is strange here," remarks Mr. Suckoothumb very pensively. He almost wishes he were safely back again at Sillifant Hall.

"You'll get accustomed to our ways in time. Thus, for instance, as regards the proctor. You may have observed the common tradesman's advertisement, '*Why pay more?*'—well, whenever I see that puff, I always write underneath it, '*Why pay at all?*' So as regards the proctor—what I ask is, 'Why offend him?' All you have to do is to observe the usual formalities, and he retires as meek as a lamb."

"What formalities, please?"

"Just this. You cannon against him, we

will say, in 'the High.' Good. He whips off his cap, and asks if you're a member of this University? You instantaneously lug off your bowler, bow as low as your back will go, and reply, 'Sir to you!' He then puts a string of questions, such as 'your name and college? are you vaccinated? what was the profession of your late father? have you passed smalls?' and so on—to all of which you make the same uniform answer, 'Sir to you!' and he hooks it, quite satisfied. It's a trial of patience, that's all."

"It's a vewy odd and lunatical pwoceeding," remarks Mr. S. S.

"Nothing more eccentric than many others which we have inherited from the dark ages. However, whilst we are thus jawing you are forgetting business. Tie up your stockings."

"My stockings," urges Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb, "are socks, and they don't tie at all. My gwandma knitted them for me, and they fit vewy tightly to the calf of the leg."

Mr. Flygilloway laughs. So also do Messrs. Tumbuster and Steptoe, who are disturbed in the midst of an argument as to whether a handfives court should be hampered or not with a projecting buttress.

"Here," cries Mr. Tumbuster, "if you

can't tie your stockings yourself, allow me to perform that office for you ! " and then, suiting the action to the word, he proceeds to fill Mr. Suckoothumb's glass to the very brim.

" Stop ! stop ! " exclaims that gentleman, " I never dwink more than two glasses of wine at home, and my gwandma made me pwomise to be vewy careful."

" But you must. You positively must," urges Mr. Flygilloway.

" I weally couldn't. Hie, waiter, would you oblige me by dwinking this glass of port wine for me ! It might get into my head."

Thus adjured, the waiter makes no bones, but gurgles the dark fluid down greedily, remarking as he smacks his lips that it's the right sort, and hasn't got no headache in it.

" Now," says Mr. Flygilloway, after flooring the remaining two glasses at the bottom of the bottle, " let us take a peep at our friend the proctor."

" And his sanguinawy quadwupeds," chimes in Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb, who having already exceeded his usual allowance by three glasses, is beginning to feel elated, nay more, almost daring.

As they sally forth into the High Street,

followed closely by Messrs. Tumbuster and Steptoe, Mr. Suckoothumb whispers, "Will it be necessawy to bow if we should chance to encounter the pwoctor? Do I understand you wightly?"

"Certainly," responds Mr. Flygilloway, "a sort of Oriental salaam business, you know. However, by George! here is the critter, coming down upon us like a hail-storm."

Sure enough—by the flaring gas light they can make out the dreaded functionary, distinguished from all other academics by his black velvet sleeves, and followed by a *posse comitatus*, nicknamed bull-dogs, and the University marshal.

"I see the pwoctor," murmurs Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb; "but dash me if I can catch a glimpse of his dogs."

There was no time for palaver. In a trice they are confronted by the official himself, who perceiving a young gentleman not in academical costume, raises his cap with severe politeness, and inquires if Mr. Suckoothumb may be a member of the University. Receiving a nudge from Mr. Flygilloway, who retreats a few paces, Mr. S. S. at once pulls off his hat, waves it at right angles to his body, and almost shouts in the proctor's ears, "Sir to you!"

"Your name and college, sir?" asks the proctor austerely. He is distinctly outraged by these pantomimic gestures.

Mr. Suckoothumb is equal to the occasion. With an even wider sweep of the hat, and a still deeper obeisance, he responds, "Sir to you!"

"Don't trifle, sir!" cries the proctor, flushing with indignation.

"Sir to you!" again responds Mr. Suckoothumb, in a lamentable voice, at the same time bowing almost to his knees, and remaining wholly uncovered. To tell the truth, he is quite inclined to rue this adventure, being altogether terrified lest he should be veritably locked up for the night.

At this juncture the University marshal taps him gently on the shoulder, superadding the following advice, "You'd best give the proctor your name and college, sir, or—"

The remainder of the sentence is lost upon Mr. Suckoothumb, who at once perceiving that something is wrong somewhere, proceeds to make an appeal to the great man's mercy.

"I assure you, sir," he says, "that I mean no offence; and I hope as a stwanger to this University, I may not be impwisoned for ignowance of wules I couldn't possibly

know by intuition. If you would kindly, sir, let me off this time, I pwomise as a gentleman that as soon as ever I have matwiculated, I will leave Oxford by the vewy next twain!"

"Then, sir," observes the proctor, "you are not, if I understand you, a member of this University?"

"How can I be?" urges Mr. Suckoothumb, plaintively, "before ever I've matwic—matwiculated!"

He has a hitch in the throat, and feels very uncomfortable.

"In that case, sir," rejoins the proctor, "I should recommend you when you are admitted to the privileges and membership of our academical body on no account to insult the proctor."

"I—I wouldn't for the world. Upon my sacwed honour I wouldn't," asseverates Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb, as somewhat crestfallen he watches the retreating footsteps of the dignitary and his satellites. From this unpleasant reverie he is aroused by a tremendous dig in the small of the back, simultaneously with which unpleasant familiarity arises a loud chorus of exuberant laughter.

"Bravo! bravissimo! very much bravo!" yells Mr. Flygilloway, whose spirits

are in a tip top condition of exultation. "You'd make your fortune, Mr. Suckoothumb, as a comic actor! Let me congratulate you, sir, on the inimitable way in which you fetched the proctor. It will be all over the University by hall-time to-morrow, and you will be the idol of the hour."

"I consider, gentlemen," retorts Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb, drawing back with an amazing effort at dignity, "that I have been shamefully hoaxed, and have weceived an unmewited affwont."

"Cheer up, Sam, and don't let your spirits go down," trolls forth Mr. Tumbuster, seizing our hero by the right arm with the grip of a cricketer. In a trice Mr. Flygilloway has clutched equally tenaciously Mr. Suckoothumb's left arm, whilst Mr. Steptoe, from behind, putting his two fists into the small of his back, propels him forwards against his will in the direction of "The Mitre" Hotel.

"Are you dwunk, gentlemen?" vociferates the unfortunate gentleman, as the bystanders stop to laugh at this ridiculous procession.

"Nothing worse than jolly!" yells Mr. Tumbuster. "Heave ahead, Steptoe."

Thus incited, Mr. Steptoe redoubles his

efforts, to the marked discomfiture of Mr. Suckoothumb, who begins to whimper in a style which quite justifies the *soubriquet* his grandma has given him, "I—I wish you'd let me alone. You're tortuwing my back!"

"That," rejoins Mr. Steptoe, giving him an additional dig with his bony knuckles, "is clearly a case of *Quot homines tot sententiæ*, as the hounds remarked to the fox, when he expostulated about their inconsiderate pace!"

CHAPTER II

On the morning following the occurrences recorded in the previous chapter, I have to announce that three young gentlemen, all of whom were guests of the well-known "Mitre" Hotel, awake with a splitting headache. Of these three Mr. Stuart Suckoothumb appears by far the worst, although he imbibed less than the others on the previous night. From excessively delicate rearing his stomach has become preternaturally weak, his digestion inferior, his liver sluggish. Hence a "Mitre" feast so far affected him as to render breakfast a nauseating spectacle, and intellectual effort almost an impossibility for his reeling head.

"I'm vewy, vewy thirsty," he bleats forth dismally, as Mr. Tumbuster, who is manfully trying to conquer his own hot coppers by deglutition, offers him the leg of a grilled fowl artistically seasoned.

"Here, man!" exclaims that worthy, "try and pick a bit of this devil, even if it's only the pepper and mustard."

"I—I couldn't," moans Mr. S. S. "I should bwing it up again on the spot. I feel as if my inside was swimming wound and wound, and as if my head would dwop off, it's so vewy heavy."

"Poor beast!" exclaims Mr. Flygilloway, who enters at this very instant, looking, to use his own terminology, "as fresh as paint."

"I—I only wish my gwandma was here!" howls Mr. Suckoothumb, somewhat enraged at this scornful pity; "I'd lay my head upon her lap, I would, and twy to go to sleep."

"What, and cut matriculation!" cries Mr. Flygilloway. "That would never do, my boy. Come, we must prescribe. You are suffering from an attack of hypogastria in the male. That's what's the row. Lucky for you it is not in the female, or it would be all U P!"

"What's that?" asks Mr. S. S. languidly.

"Never you mind. I've had it myself, and, honour bright, if you'll swallow one glass of my physic you'll be cured in a second."

"I'd swallow a gallon, that is, if I could,"

wails Mr. Suckoothumb, miserably, "if it would but do me good."

Without another word Mr. Flygilloway departs from the coffee-room, and in a very few minutes returns, bearing a tumbler full of sparkling liquid, very luscious to look upon.

"Drink, pretty creature, drink!" he cries, cheerily.

After some little demur, Mr. Suckoothumb puts it to his lips, sips it, then has some more, then more still. Finally, he drains it to the dregs, quite noisily.

"I—I'm certainly vewy much better," he exclaims. "What is that seductive fluid called?"

"Only nectar," replies Mr. F., sitting down to his breakfast. "I got it straight from Olympus."

"I'll twy and swallow a morsel of that chicken, and a slice of bwead-and-butter, if you please," cries Mr. Suckoothumb, almost jauntily.

"That's right," gurgles Mr. Flygilloway between his toast and his coffee. "Never say die!"

"I—I didn't make use of the expwession," rejoins Mr. S. S. "All I said was bwead-and-butter, and I do wish somebody would cut me a slice. It's always cut for me at my gwandma's."

" That's the unkindest cut of all," growls Mr. Steptoe.

" It's nothing of the sort ; it's quite the weverse," urges our hero, almost angrily. " Why, I might lacewate my fingers, if the knife should happen to slip ! "

At this declaration of total incompetence there arises a perfect chorus of derisive mirth, wherein I am ashamed to say the waiter joins quite as loudly as anybody present. Mr. Suckoothumb feels not a little irritated to find himself thus laughed at ; yet somehow, quite unaccountably, he cannot help joining in the general cachinnation, and that, too, to such extent, that the tears run down his cheeks.

" He ! he ! It's vewy odd ; he ! he !—but I never in my lifetime felt so inclined —he ! he !—to laugh at nothing at all !—he ! he ! "

" Give him some more, Fly," whispers Mr. Tumbuster, " and then he'll laugh at old Swat."

There is no necessity, however, to dose our young gentleman any further. In fact, so exuberant are his spirits that he actually flings the leg of the fowl playfully at Mr. Steptoe, tipping that stolid personage neatly on the butt end of the nose.

" I say," he growls, " young Skifter, don't you do that again."

"Why not? He! he! he!"

"*Quot homines tot sententiæ.* That's why."

Breakfast satisfactorily concluded, the whole party march off to St. Aldate's College, Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb still continuing to laugh incontinently. On arrival at the porter's lodge, the three freshmen are directed to the dining hall, where the Matriculation Examination is to be held, whilst Mr. Flygilloway betakes himself to the lecture-room of one of the tutors, having previously inserted a quill between his teeth in order to convey the impression to his superior's mind of perfect indifference to scholarship, science, history, divinity, and all other subjects of study.

"It's a vewy lofty building—he! he!" whispers Mr. Suckoothumb to Mr. Tumbuster, as he gazes upon the open timber work of the ancient refectory of St. Aldate's College.

There are some dozen or so of schoolboys standing in the centre of the hall, awaiting the advent of Mr. Swat, who is to conduct the examination. Most of them appear solemn, and nearly all decidedly nervous. To them the tall and defiant Tumbuster, who is a sufficiently advanced classic to be able to secretly regard the examination as a

solemn farce, and our friend Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb with his perpetual grin, and his occasional peal of irrepressible merriment, must seem almost as interlopers, for they stare upon them in mute surprise.

After a few minutes' delay, Mr. Swat, in full academicals, followed by a lesser tutorial star bearing printed copies of the papers, enters the hall. Whereupon the candidates, with all the beautiful modesty of ingenuous youth, huddle together uncomfortably, as if he were a dangerous wild beast or General De Wet with his shambok.

Not so Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb, who immediately he perceives the stately presence of his travelling acquaintance of yesterday, dances rapidly across the floor and at once proffers his hand, as if to an old friend.

"H—how do you do, sir? I wegwet that I was unable to discharge my little debt of thirteen and fourpence, he! he! he! yesterday, but—"

"Never mind, sir, now. We can discuss these small matters afterwards," interposes Mr. Swat, whose countenance seems to have grown remarkably rigid since yesterday afternoon.

Being thus snubbed, Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb can but follow the example of his

partners in misery, and in solemn silence take a seat opposite to a large sheet of blotting-paper and a brace of quill pens.

In a few minutes everybody, Mr. Swat, of course, excepted, is engaged in scratching away as hard as they can scratch. Having satisfied himself that the candidates are properly provided with the needful writing materials, the tutor takes a seat at the high table, and commences reviewing a pile of examination questions.

All of a sudden, however, the deep repose of the hall is interrupted by a curious sound, which I can only attempt to render phonetically as—

"*Cneuck!*"

Mr. Swat looks round. Nobody has sneezed or coughed, or for the matter of that, choked, and yet a broad grin pervades the countenances of all.

Uncertain as to the cause of this explosion —I can use no better word—Mr. Swat returns to his questions.

In, it may be, ten minutes more, he is again disturbed by the same sound, only somewhat louder. This is followed by a suppressed titter.

"What is the matter, Mr. Suckoothumb?" he asks.

"He! he! he!" responds that gentle-

man. "N—nothing, sir.
thinking of something vewy
"Then, sir," retorts Mr.
"if you are unable to keep you
on an occasion like the present,
retarding the work of others, y
retire."

"It, it isn't that, sir. I've
wude, and I'd wather not wet
kind permission."

Mr. Swat appears decidedly
all likelihood would summar
Suckoothumb, when just a
instant there enters the hall a
prime importance, to whom
bound by his statutes to rer
deference.

This individual is no less th
able Provost of St. Aldate's,
Jelly, who seventy years ag
sprightly young blade, but ju
to be rather in his dotage thar

"Ith there," he says, addres
as if he were his butler, "it
a gentleman among the ca
matriculathon of the name c
No, not Thillifant, I mean Thu

"There is such a person, M
replies Mr. Swat, in a sort of
tone.

"Then, thir, ask the gentleman to thtep forward and thpeak to me. Hith family ith of great conthiderathon and antiquity."

"Mr. Suckoothumb," cries aloud Mr. Swat, in a snappish tone of voice, as soon as he has contrived to tow his aged chief to a chair on the dais, "will you come here, sir? The Provost wishes to speak to you."

"That's your tip!" whispers Mr. Tumbuster, as Mr. S. S. passes him. "Butter the old blackguard, and you'll pip Swat."

In no small mystification Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb marches slowly up the great hall, and is duly presented to the venerable Provost, who gives him two fingers to shake with as much pomposity as if he were the Pope patronising a beggar.

"I'm very gratified to make your acquaintanth, thir," says the almighty don. "I hope, thir, when you have matriculated at thith college, you will do me the honour of dining with me, thir. How is your rethpected grandfather, Thir Thomath Thillifant, of Thillifant Hall?"

"My gwandpa," replies Mr. Suckoothumb, "has been dead for nearly half a centuwy; but my gwandma, Lady Sillifant, is quite well, thank you."

"You don't thay tho, thir," cries the old man, holding up his shrivelled hands.

"Thir Thomath Thillifant dead? Deear, deear, deear!!! He wath an old and a valued friend of mine, wath your rethpected grandfather, Mr. Thucklethumb."

As the Provost looks as if he expects him to make some reply to this blarney—the old humbug always affects to know intimately every human being with a handle to his name—Mr. Suckoothumb politely remarks that his "gwandma will be flattered to hear that her late husband has been wemembered so kindly."

This soft sawder fetches the old man directly.

"I thank you, thir," he responds quite cordially. "You are evidently a young man of great promith, and will confer honour upon thith Univerthity, as well as upon the name of Thillifant Thuck—Thuck—I forget, thir, the retht of your name."

"Suckoothumb," mildly suggests its proprietor.

"Thucklethumb. Quite tho. I am delighted, thir, to make your acquaintanth, and I hope you will find yourthelf quite comfortable, when you come into rethidenth in this college, thir."

At this point the old Provost intended to have bowed off the young gentleman unto whom it has delighted him to do honour;

but Mr. S. S. conceives that he has now acquired a point of vantage over Mr. Swat, who is looking askance at his superior, not without a feeling of disgust at his solemn vagaries, and therefore he resolves to make hay whilst the sun shines.

"I beg pardon, Mr. Pwovost," he says meekly, "but—"

"Wath, thir?" shouts the Provost, "I'm rather deaf!"

"Only, Mr. Pwovost, I was going to ask if you think it pwobable that I shall get thwough?"

"Geth through wath, thir?" demands the don irritably.

"The Matwiculation Examination, sir?"

"Of courth you will, thir. You have learnt your Greek grammar, I thuppose, thir?"

"I—I don't know all of these howwible iwwegular verbs, Mr. Pwovost, but I've learnt some of them."

"Thath's quite thatithfactory, thir. And you can write a pieth of Latin prose, I imathine."

"The cuwate who coached me said that my pwose was better than my Latin."

"To be thure. Mithter Thwat, will you oblithe me by handing me Mr. Thuckle-thum's paperth, when they are written."

Having thus, by an unconscious stroke of diplomacy, secured the Provost for his examiner, who is both blind, deaf and dull,

vice Mr. Swat, who is totally the reverse, Mr. S. S., if only he were wise, would let well alone. His mind, however, has been run-

ning on the chance of failure, and he cannot escape from that ugly presentiment. Hence he foolishly returns to the charge.

"I—I've got a bit of Howace to twanslate," he remarks. "It begins :—

"Quum tu, Lydia, Telephi."

"And I've forgotten, Mister Pwovost, what's the pwecise meaning of the word 'Telephi.'"

Now at the sound of Latin, a language which has faded almost entirely from his memory, the old Provost starts as if he were stabbed, and in point of fact in peril of his reputation.

"You muthn't ask questionth," he observes nervously. "Go to your theat, thir, and write down anything you may happen to remember in answer to the questionth, and when you've done bring your paperth to me."

* * *

About four o'clock in the afternoon, a conference is held in the common-room between Mr. Swat, his assistant tutor, and the Provost, the subject-matter being the qualifications of the candidates.

"Mr. Tumbuster, sir," remarks Mr. Swat, addressing his chief, "has passed the best examination, and we recommend him accordingly for the vacant exhibition."

"Tumbuthter," repeats the old man, "that'th a name I am not acquainted with."

"Mr. Steptoe," continues Mr. Swat, "we think, had better go back to school for another half year. His grammar is execrable."

"Theptoe!" cries the old Provost. "Why that'th a grandthon of my old friend, Dr. Theptoe, of All Thoulth. I cannot agree with your opinion on that point, Mr. Thwat."

"Very well," replies the tutor doggedly. "As you like, Mr. Provost, only don't blame me if the young man breaks down before the University Examiners. He is likely enough to disgrace us."

"It would be an extremely improbable contínthency," rejoins the Provost sturdily. The old man is an autocrat in his college, and something more.

"And Mr. Suckoothumb," continues Mr. Swat. "You have his papers, Mr. Provost. I can only say that if they are as lame as his *vivâ voce*, he is utterly unfit to matriculate."

"Thir," replies the Provost decidedly, "Mr. Thucklethumb is the grandthon of my esteemed friend, the late Thir Thomas Thillifant, of Thillifant Hall. He is a perthon himthelf of conthiderathon. And lastly, he has done himthelf infinite credit

in the examinathon. I won't *hear*, Mr. Thwat, of thuch an ornament to the college being dithmithed."

The Provost being to all intents and purposes Lord Paramount of St. Aldate's College, Mr. Swat can but bow his acquiescence, and accordingly within ten minutes Mr. Suckoothumb, in company with Messrs. Tumbuster and Steptoe, finds himself marching off to the Vice-Chancellor's to be formally matriculated as a member of the University of Oxford.

"I may as well inform you both," observes Mr. Swat, addressing Messrs. Steptoe and Suckoothumb, "that if I had had my way I should have rejected you, but I was over-ruled."

"*Quot homines*, you know," whispers Mr. Steptoe jocosely. "It's lucky St. Aldate's ain't composed entirely of Swats!"

Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb is quite inclined to agree with him.

The ceremony of matriculation is soon over, the fees to the University are duly paid all round, and then Mr. Swat fires his parting shot, which though well meant is resented.

"You will, gentlemen," he says, "if you please, leave Oxford to-night. We make it a rule not to permit matriculated members of our college to sleep in Oxford without

special permission, and for a good reason. We have found by experience that young gentlemen like yourselves, just fresh from school, are apt, if they are suffered to remain at hotels, to infringe the discipline of the University. I wish you all good-bye till next term."

"Hum!" remarks Mr. Tumbuster. "I don't mean to bolt in such a desperate hurry. Why, Flygilloway asked us to wine to-night, so it's out of the question, and in fact impossible."

He is thus expressing himself to Mr. Steptoe, who wholly coincides with his notions, and announces his determination to sleep at the "Mitre," regardless of results.

"I—I must catch the next twain," observes Mr. Suckoothumb nervously.

"Bosh, my brave youth!" cries Mr. Tumbuster. "It's out of the question. Do you know that you promised Flygilloway last night faithfully to wine with him this evening?"

"I'm sure I never contwacted such an engagement," avers Mr. S. S.

"I'll swear you did. Didn't he, Steptoe?"

"Most certainly," is the prompt reply. "It would be a most unheard-of thing to accept an invitation and then bolt."

"It's vewy awkward," murmurs Mr. Suckoothumb. "I'm quite astonished to think I could have made such a pwomise without knowing it. Besides which, my gwandma will expect me at Sillifant."

"All right," responds Mr. Tumbuster. "We won't argue; the thing's settled. Now let us go back to the 'Mitre,' write excuses to Swat—it wouldn't otherwise pay for him to hear from the St. Aldate's porter that we've been larking in Flygilloway's rooms till a late hour—and, you, Suckoothumb, had better tip your old woman a line. Say what you like, only avoid rows. The old girl might cut you out of her will, or do something demoniacal, so it's as well to be civil."

"But I love my gwandma," urges Mr. Suckoothumb eagerly.

"All the more reason, then, why you should avoid giving offence, eh! Come along, my hearties. We don't floor an examination every day, so—

"Why, soldiers, why should we be melancholy, boys?"

Arrived at the "Mitre" coffee-room, Mr. Tumbuster promptly orders paper, envelopes, pens, and ink. Then he writes as follows on his own account:—

"Mr. Tumbuster presents his compliments to the Rev. Augustus Swat, M.A., and

begs to inform him that having received a telegram from his father, requesting him to remain in Oxford till to-morrow, he feels himself unable to leave as requested by Mr. Swat this afternoon."

"But," exclaims Mr. Suckoothumb, "that isn't twue, is it?"

"Who said it was?" cooly retorts Mr. Tumbuster. "You don't suppose that a great University like Oxford proposes to eliminate the faculty of imagination. I consider fiction to be at least as respectable as fact!"

"I don't know what I'm to wite!" observes Mr. Suckoothumb, looking as foolish as he feels.

"I'll dictate," answers Mr. Tumbuster firmly. "Now then, look alive. Take your pen, and just copy what I say. Come, are you ready?"

"All wight, I'm weady. But don't be too imaginative."

"Very good. Here goes, then."

"Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb presents his compliments to the Rev. A. Swat, fellow and tutor of St. Aldate's College, and begs to apologise for his inability to leave Oxford to-night. Mr. Suckoothumb in postponing his departure till to-morrow morning is acting under the express instructions of his

grandmother, Lady Sillifant, who has written to request him to meet her in London early to-morrow."

"What a howwible violation of twuth!" ejaculates Mr. Suckoothumb.

"My dear sir," responds Mr. Tumbuster, "you are ignorant of the world. Believe me that whatever you are it does not pay to be squeamish. No one respects you, and you become the mere dupe of any casual Swat who may take it into his head to order you about."

"But my gwandma!" cries Mr. Suckoothumb. "It's much more important not to offend *her!*"

"All serene. I'm equal to the emergency. Write away."

"My dearest granny, you will be glad to hear that I have passed the Matriculation Examination with the most perfect ease. The Provost, who professes himself to have been in former years an intimate friend of my grandpapa, received me with open arms, and tells me I shall certainly take a first class. Nothing could have been more flattering than the eulogy passed upon my work by the Rev. Mr. Swat, the senior tutor. Not that I care for his praise on my own account; but I know it will gladden the heart of my own dear granny, and that's

enough. There is only one thorn in my rose, one bitter drop in my cup of sweetness, and that is that this worthy gentleman, Mr. Swat, absolutely refuses to allow me to leave Oxford before to-morrow morning. He declares that my matriculation, which took place to-day in the presence of the Esquires' Bedell, and several personages of the highest rank in the University, will be absolutely invalidated, and in fact null and void unless I pernoctate over it. So that I cannot kiss my dear granny before to-morrow afternoon at the earliest. And, now in order to catch the post, good-bye. I am just sitting down with a thoughtful student-acquaintance to an evening of Herodotus and Virgil. The *genius loci* infects me, and though I didn't like classics at Sillifant, I love them in Oxford.

"I am, ever your devoted baby, S. S."

"There," vociferates Mr. Tumbuster, "if that ain't not enough to fetch the larkiest old woman that ever wore enamel, I'll eat my hat!"

"I'd wather," rejoins Mr. Suckoothumb, "far wather eat some cold beef, or a hawicot, or a woast fowl."

"So you shall directly. However, first of all, just oblige me by directing these envelopes, and I'll send the letters off."

Without a moment's reflection Mr. Suckoothumb directs one to Lady Sillifant, the other to the Rev. Augustus Swat, St. Aldate's College. As for Mr. Tumbuster, he rapidly folds up the letters, and enclosing each in an envelope despatches them by the boots, the one to the post office, the other together with his own effusion, to St. Aldate's College.

There is only one little hitch in this admirable arrangement.

That one hitch is, that Mr. Tumbuster being excited and hurried contrives to put the letter to Lady Sillifant in the cover addressed to Mr. Swat, and the letter to Mr. Swat in that addressed to Lady Sillifant, thereby proving the truth of the distich—

> "Oh, what a tangled web men weave
> When first they study to deceive!"

After a cold collation—they are too impatient to wait for a chop or even for a potato,—our three undergraduates, as I may now term them veraciously, Messrs. Tumbuster, Steptoe and Suckoothumb, lounge magnificently in cap and gown to the gateway of St. Aldate's College, and inquire for Mr. Flygilloway's rooms.

"Mr. Flygilloway, sir? No. 3, Two-pair back, ground floor. He's got a wine on

to-night, sir. You can't make a mistake, sir. You'll hear the hollering and bawling as soon as you gits inside the harch."

The porter's conjecture proves to be quite accurate. There can be *no doubt* as to Mr. Flygilloway's apartment.

"Are they endeavouwing to wepresent Pandemonium?" asks Mr. Suckoothumb, as they arrive at the foot of the staircase. "I—I don't quite think that my gwandma would appwove of such a scene. It stwikes me that the people must be dwunk."

"Nothing of the kind," replies Mr. Tumbuster. "It's mere festivity. You'll get to like it soon enough, as the warder remarked to the casual who objected to the intemperate use of soap. Cheer up, my hearty, and don't look as if you couldn't help it."

"I feel tewwified," cries our hero. "I'm not accustomed to anything except drawing-room society. In fact I'd wather go back to 'The Mitre,' if you've no objection."

Messrs. Tumbuster and Steptoe, however, will not listen to such a manœuvre, and the result is that all three pass the rubicon, i.e., the door of Mr. Flygilloway's hospitable rooms.

They enter in the midst of a rattling chorus, the burden whereof is :—

"A glass of good old sherry, drink it down, down, down!
To make a fellow merry, drink it down, down, down!
Drink it down, drink it down, drink it down!
Da capo. Drink it down!!!

A glass of good old whiskey, drink it down, down, down!
To make a fellow frisky, drink it down, down, down!
Drink it down, drink it down, drink it down!"

And so forth for about twenty verses, including one which exhorts everybody whom it may concern, presumably in the interests of the liquor trade, to drink "a glass of good old robur, to make a fellow sober," "a glass of good old gin, to make a fellow thin," and above all "a glass of good old ink, to make a noodle think," with which climax of absurdity the row ceases, and Mr. Flygilloway, as *arbiter bibendi*, rises to propose a toast.

"Gentlemen," he says, in a tone of unwonted seriousness, "the health I am about to propose is one which you will receive with, I may say, mingled emotions. A crisis has occurred in the history of this unblemished University—a crisis the magnitude whereof we cannot well over-estimate. That crisis is connected with the pristine glory of Oxford on the river. Happily, we have squared accounts with our illustrious rivals of 'The University of Sums' on the cricket field, in the racquet court, on the board of

green cloth; but the sound of the word 'Putney' raises the blush to our faces, whilst its correlative 'Mortlake' is enough to make angels weep. However, at this crisis our own college, St. Aldate's, now as ever is ready—ay, ready. Out of twenty-four colleges, the institution to which it is our pride and happiness to belong, alone is able to provide a man—yes, gentlemen, a man whose skill as an oarsman is equal to his prowess, whose limbs and wind are evenly matched, whose pluck has been tried over many a hard rowed course. Need I, gentlemen, say one word more, except to propose the health of Mr. Rullocks, stroke of our boat, and the coming captain of the ''Varsity Eight!'"

To this succeeds not a bellow, not a shout, not a shriek; but a continuous *roar* of throats, such as fills Mr. Suckoothumb, who has sidled into an obscure corner, rather with amazement than dread. As soon as it has subsided, Mr. Flygilloway loudly demands that a toast of such surpassing interest shall be drunk in bumpers, with no heel-taps—a style of phraseology which, being incomprehensible to Mr. S. S., is politely interpreted *sotto voce* by Mr. Tumbuster.

Accordingly, Mr. Suckoothumb follows

the multitude in gulping down an entire wine-glassful of something or other in the shape of fiery liquid. What that something is he cannot divine. It might be any so-called wine under the sun. But its peculiarity is that it seems to be flavoured with cayenne pepper, and to take effect on the brain within a few seconds of being swallowed.

The evening proceeds merrily enough, though, as is ever the case in Oxford, noise is supposed to be extremely funny, charmingly amusing, and, above all, splendidly manly. Bar the bellowing, Mr. Suckoothumb not only enjoys himself, but further, being somewhat *tête monté* at passing the dreaded examination, yields to the maddening influences of the moment, and forgets his "gwandma's" caution to be very careful in the matter of wine. In fact, his pericranium is beginning to whizz like a teetotum, when Mr. Flygilloway, rising to his legs, entreats the present company to charge their glasses for one toast more.

The individuals earnestly appealed to making no demur, but, on the contrary, taking to their liquors with consistent kindliness, Mr. Flygilloway proceeds :—

"We are all, gentlemen, I should imagine, agreed as to the advisability of the occa-

sional importation of new blood into old bodies. From the days of Medea downwards the wisdom of this course has been recognised. At the same time, this inoculating process fails unless the new is good enough to amalgamate with the old. Gentlemen, St. Aldate's to-day has acquired, if I may use the metaphor, a vein of new blood; and that blood, I can affirm, is of the right sort. I will ask you, therefore, to join with me in drinking the healths of the *freshers*, coupled with the name of one who has already crowned himself with glory by an encounter with the proctor, in which the enemy had to beat a retreat ignominiously. I give you 'The Freshers,' and, as their spokesman, Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb."

"Yah! yah! yah!" hiccups the entire assemblage, rising to a man, and hammering the rickety tables till the glasses resound again.

"Musical honours!" screams Mr. Flygilloway, at the same time leading off in a stentorian voice, "For they are jolly good fellows!" and assuring them, for their edification, that this awful shindy "is a way we have in the 'Varsity, to drive dull care away. With a hip, hip, hip, hooroar!"

No sooner has this row subsided than their

glasses are filled, and each man supplements collective by individual attention.

"Mr. Sillifum, your health!" cries one.

"Mr. Sucklefant, may you," etc., etc., follows a second.

"Mr. Silloosuck, towards you!" roars a third.

"Mr. Suckoosill, my respects!" bows a fourth.

And so on, most of the company contriving either accidentally or purposely to treat our hero's name by a process known to grammarians as metathesis—to conundrum manufacturers as transposition.

Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb's reply to these obtrusive cordialities shall be reserved for another chapter.

CHAPTER III

As soon as the volley of toasts has somewhat subsided, Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb rises to respond. An attentive observer might notice that his eye is somewhat glassy, his legs a trifle rickety. His tongue, however, seems not to have lost altogether its pendulosity, although, to continue the metaphor, it ticks somewhat irregularly, not to say incontinently.

"Mishur Vlygilway and genlem'n. Ash member of th' Universh—hic—Univershty I beg thank dwink health fweshers. Schpeshly I feel gwateful for termsh in which—hic—mention my name."

A voice: "Pull your oar through the water, sir!"

"Genlemen, I—hic—I do' understand that wemark. I never—hic—never wowed a boat in—hic hic—my life. Mishur Vlygilway, genlemen, ve'y kindly 'looded

Pwoccur. Cwedit of that 'venture'sh not mine. Pwoccur's stwange cweashure to me ve'y—hic—stwange and incomp'wenshble! Can't 'schstand man 'oo lov'sh dogsh—H'—hic—hate dogsh. Ve'y 'fwaid dogsh! Genlemen, 'fore sit dow—hic—down I wish propo' toash. If Mishur Vlygilway kin'ly 'llow me, will propo' toash?"

"I WANT TO PROPOSE THE HEALTH OF MY GWANDMA."

"Hear, hear, hear!" from Mr. Flygilloway, and "Yoicks!" from the company.

"The to — to — toash shall have hon'r ashk you all dwink-ish—hic—ish th' health lady, ve'y dear fweind, welation, tha'short thing you know."

Here Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb pauses solemnly and winks with his left eye, whilst his mouth shows signs of dribbling at the corners.

"Drive on, Suck!" cries one impatiently.

"Gee-up, Thumb!" vociferates another cheerily.

"Don't be shy! She ain't behind the door!" bellows a third.

"La'sh not 'xacly young, or byooful," proceeds Mr. S. S., nothing abashed by these sarcastic utterances, "bud—hic—she'sh venewable, and—hic—she'sh nish. Genlemen, I ashk you dwink health of my *gwandma!*"

"Your how much?" demands Mr. Rullocks, the stroke, in amazement.

"My gwandma, shir," returns Mr. Suckoothumb, with maudlin dignity. "That ish La' Siffilan, Siffi—hic—Siffilan Hall."

"Brayvo! Well pulled! Now you're gaining, sir!" resound from all corners of the large room, whereunto an enthusiast adds, "Let's give the old girl musical honours!"—a suggestion which at once evokes,—

> "For she's a jolly good fellow,
> For she's a jolly good fellow,
> For she's a jolly good fe—el—low,
> Which nobody can deny!"

And so forth for five consecutive minutes at least, during the whole of which our hero continues on his legs, beaming graciously on the company present, and rocking himself to and fro like a ship at anchor in a gale of wind.

"Our grandmamma!"

"Hip! hip! hip! hooroor! Our grandmamma! May she live to the end of her days! May she cut up fat! May her shadow be never the less!" In the midst of which amicable greetings Lady Sillifant's health is imbibed and, some kindly hand giving Mr. Suckoothumb's coat-tails a pull, that gentleman subsides blandly and vacuously, after bowing like a mandarin to the various healths which are fired at him like pistol shots.

"I tell you what it is, Suckle, my boy," cries Mr. Flygilloway, "I believe you're in love with your aged relative!"

"Why mayn't gwandson—hic—love his welative?" retorts Mr. Suckoothumb.

"A man may not marry his grandmother," solemnly observes Mr. Rullocks—a speech which provokes a chorus of inextinguishable laughter.

At this juncture, however, Mr. Suckoothumb begins to advance imperceptibly from the jolly into the quarrelsome stage of glorification. Starting to his legs impulsively, and thereby capsizing a brace of wine glasses, he loudly exclaims in a tone which, were it firmer, might serve for indignant,—

"I'm not—hic—gentlemen, pwepared

tolewa—hic, hic—tolewate any weflections on chawacter gwand—hic "

"Call her *hœc*, sir, whatever you do," interrupts Mr. Tumbuster. "She can't be masculine and feminine both, you know!"

"I didn't shay hic—hic—nor *hœc*—hic —either. I shed gwand—hic—gwandma —hic hic hic."

"*Quoshomineshtoshtentiœ!*" murmurs Mr. Steptoe, who seems to have been making an experiment on his internal organisation by way of testing its maximum capacity—an experiment which has somewhat curiously reacted on the tongue.

"You ma'—hic—that wemark before on sevewal—hics—'casions!" This quite wrathfully from Mr. Suckoothumb.

"Come, come!" cries Mr. Flygilloway in his usual happy tone. "This'll never do. You mustn't get out of temper, Suckle, on a festive occasion like the present. Gentlemen, I call on Mr. Tumbuster to favour us with a song. One with a *busting* chorus, my *Tum*, if you please."

The idea is eagerly caught at, and the call for a stave is echoed all round. Whereupon Mr. Tumbuster, taken a trifle by surprise, begins to ponder over his slender repository of ditties—a pause which Mr. Suckoothumb at once utilises.

"I know—hic—sush funny shong!" he exclaims, with a giggle.

"Hear! hear! Mr. Suckle for a song!" cries Mr. Rullocks.

"Sush funny shong. My—hic—gwandma shings it shometimsh. Ish sush funny shong!!!"

"Spit it out, Suckle! Don't be shy! Take him to the piano! Here, you fellows, make way for the great Sucklethumb."

Mr. Flygilloway, like an old hound, scents sport, and therefore promptly tows his victim, whose gait is decidedly unsteady, to the instrument in the further corner of the room, and sits him down plump on the music stool.

"He! he! he!" commences our hero. "Ish sush a funny shong!"

"All right, my boy!" vociferates Mr. Flygilloway. "Chant a-head, then!"

Thus adjured, Mr. Suckoothumb executes some excruciating discords with his fingers on the keyboard. His hand is not constitutionally small nor do his fingers taper. In fact, they are rather splay in shape than not, which circumstance, coupled with an uncertainty of vision, may account for each individual finger taking down three notes, viz., one in the centre and one on either side, the result being emphatically "Dutch," and

to the cultivated ear indescribably discordant. This by way of prelude. Then he pauses for a second, and, twisting round on the music stool, faces his audience with,—

"He! he! he! Ish—hic—sho ve'y funny; it makes me—hic—feel widic—hic hic—wid, wid, widiculous!"

"Never mind," shouts the chorus, "we won't laugh."

"Ve'y well. I'll twy. (Bang on the keyboard.) This beashly pyanno wo' shound wight. Now for it, though I can't—hic—shing so well as my gwandma. She'sh very fun—ve'y—hic—funny!"

Opening his mouth cavernously, our hero proceeds at once to electrify his hearers with

"Fwog he would a wooing go—hic!
Hic!—ho, says Wowly,
Wesher his gwandma would let him or no—hic!
With his wowly poly, gammon an' spinnish,
Hic!—hic!! says Antony Wowly!!!"

"He, he, he!" exclaims Mr. Suckoothumb gleefully, as his efforts to please meet with a deafening round of applause. "Feel ve'y jolly. Oxforsh nish pla—hic—nish place. He! he!"

"Tip us the second stave!" is the universal appeal.

Just then, however, Jommas, the scout, enters upon the scene, bearing a silver

tankard of something iced, and the song is interrupted for the nonce.

"What's the wet?" inquires Mr. Rullocks, with the air of a *connoisseur*.

"Only lemonade," responds Mr. Flygilloway, with a knowing wink.

"Lem'nade!" vociferates Mr. Suckoothumb enthusiastically. "I'm ve'y fon' lem'nade. My gwandma likesh lem—hic, hic—lem'nade."

"Here you are, sir," observes Mr. Rullocks, politely handing him the tankard which is filled to the very brim.

"Why doeshn't it fish—schparkle?" he asks, staring vacuously into the depths of the tankard, on the surface whereof may be observed, floating around a sort of iceberg, several slices of lemon, cut thin by the scientific caterer for the common-room.

"Try it, my Suckle," suggests Mr. Flygilloway, grinning mischievously.

Having deposited a small river of the luscious liquid on his shirt-front and waistcoat, Mr. Suckoothumb sips, then laps, finally gulps down about half a pint or so, more or less.

"Ish delishious—hic—gug—glowious dweam! If 'twasn't gweedy, would aschk mo'; would 'deed!"

"No, no," suggests Mr. Flygilloway, who

catches something very unusual in the expression of his guest ; " enough's as good as a feast, my chicken ! You'll be mops and brooms before long, if you don't take care ! "

" Bwooms ! he, he ! "

" Yes, brooms, as sure as your name's Suckle. Why, what the dickens is the matter with the fellow ? "

He may well ask, for this so-called lemonade, which is in reality iced gin punch, has not only acted upon our hero like laughing gas, so that his perpetual " he, he ! " resounds like the note of a persistent macaw, but seems also to have affected his legs, which he is kicking about wildly and frantically, to the detriment of Mr. Flygilloway's piano.

" Ish all wight ! " yells festive Mr. Suckoothumb. " It's byootiful ; only—hic—wha' lot candlsh there ish in woom ! Why sush lot candlsh ? "

" I say," murmurs Mr. Rullocks confidentially, " Fly, your freshman's as drunk as a lord ! "

Unfortunately this ugly epithet reaches Mr. Suckoothumb's ear, and has upon his brain the same result as the typical red rag upon a bull.

" Who darsh 'sult me by—hic—shayin'

I'm dwunk ? I'm not dwunk ; I'm—hic—o'ly he ! he ! he ! "

As everybody laughs long and loud at this sally, Mr. Suckoothumb, instead of getting up a quarrel with Mr. Rullocks, whom, in fact, he can hardly discern, laughs even longer and louder than anybody, and then winds up a wild guffaw by seizing both the candles on either side of the piano, and striking them so ferociously on the brackets whereon they have been standing as to smash the aforesaid brackets to shivers ; with which bit of wanton destruction he is so unutterably charmed as to go off into a continuous " he ! he ! " from whence he is at last only relieved by overbalancing the music stool and measuring his entire length on the floor.

CHAPTER IV

"VE'YJOLL'FLOOR. Woolikes'eeponthishjoll'-floor? Lemmelone! Dolt'sturbmysweew'pose! S'allbeseepinshec'ndifyou'llolylemmelone!"

"That won't do at all, at all!" cries Mr. Flygilloway determinately; "not at any price whatsomever. Here, get up, will you?"

But all the lugging at Mr. Suckoothumb's inert *corpus* will not induce him to rise. It looks, too, very much as if it were a matter of impossibility.

"Tell him," whispers Mr. Tumbuster, "that if he don't get up at once he will be expelled the University."

Taking the hint, Mr. Flygilloway tries him with this shadowy threat.

"Dol'tcare," he grunts in response. "Tell gwandmashall! Lemmegos'eep!"

"What is to be done with the animal?"

moans forth Mr. Flygilloway, fairly posed. "If he sleeps here all night it will get round to the dean, and there will be no end of a row. I wish to goodness, Rullocks, you hadn't given him that detestable punch!"

"Leave him alone for five minutes," observes Mr. Rullocks dogmatically, in reply.

This advice is accepted all the more readily because no alternative course presents itself. In less than half a minute Lady Sillifant's grandson lies sound asleep as a humming-top—his brain, be it added, uncomfortably resembling that toy of his earlier days.

The assembled company, which has been thinning for the past hour, has just settled itself cosily to bridge, when, from the corner of the room where our hero lies recumbent, there issues forth an extraordinary noise.

"Hallo, Suckle!" cries Mr. Rullocks. "Here, somebody—anybody—hold up his head!"

If any over-curious person wants a more accurate description of the precise condition of Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb at this interesting crisis of his life, let me recommend him to consult his Odyssey. Homer is infinitely more graphic than I am, and less chained by the fetters of delicacy. Nothing

can be more thoroughly explanatory than his description of Ulysses, when an accident befell him somewhat similar to that which has overtaken our miserable freshman.

"Shallbedeadinaminit!" he gasps. "Wememerlashwordonlipswash—gwandma. Eugh?"

Let me draw the veil of oblivion over the terrible agony of a harmless sufferer. After all—not to moralise—that was rather a cruel practical joke of Mr. Rullocks. He tries to make up for it, though, by his assiduity in helping Mr. Tumbuster later in the evening, after that Mr. Suckoothumb has had a nap on Mr. Flygilloway's sofa, to steer him back to "The Mitre,"—a task not accomplished without considerable difficulty. At last, however, with the aid of the waiter, he is actually landed in his bed-room, undressed, and put into bed.

"Thank goodness!" growls the stroke, who has had enough of it.

"The same here!" echoes Mr. Tumbuster; adding, "Night night, Suckle; keep up your pecker in the morning!"

"Wi—wishyousendlandladyhere. Waltschpeaktoher."

"Eh? What?" demands Mr. Rullocks. "Landlady! most improper, sir!"

"Olelywalthertuckmeup. Mygwandma-always—hic—tuckmeupandgimmekiss-evewynight."

"Oh, bosh!" responds sturdy Mr. Rullocks. "I'm not going to tell the landlady to kiss you. Kiss yourself, and go to sleep."

With which advice both gentlemen retire, having taken the precaution to see that his candle is properly doused, and his head well raised on his pillow.

"Hang me," ejaculates Mr. Rullocks, "if ever again I administer a dose of gin punch to a fresher!"

* * * *

"I say, Suckle, we'd better be off earlyish, or there will be a rumpus with our friend Swat. He's a fellow, you know, who's all there, and can see through a brick wall as easily as a stethoscope."

The speaker is Mr. Tumbuster, who, having breakfasted off devilled kidneys, and brandied-and-soda'ed his very Vesuvian coppers away, has considerately ascended to the second floor of the hotel, in order to cheer up poor Mr. Suckoothumb, of whose existing condition he is able to form an imperfect guess.

A more pitiable spectacle could hardly be

conceived than presents itself to his inquiring eye. That the poor young gentleman is really ill is too evident; in fact, if you were to pay him, he could not at the present moment lift his head from the pillow. He feels, therefore, both unequal and unwilling to reply to Mr. Tumbuster's remark.

"Why, what's the matter? Did you swallow your tongue last night as well as the gin punch? Eh, Suckle?"

Still, however, the sufferer cannot rouse himself to utterance; he does, however, emit from beneath the bed clothes a feeble moan, thereby giving evidence of his continued mundane existence.

"I'm afraid you're very bad!" ejaculates Mr. Tumbuster in a tone more sympathetic than is usual with him.

"I'm howwibly ill," falters Mr. Suckoothumb. "Howwibly! Would you oblige me by sending for a doctor, and telegwaphing for my gwandma?"

"Doctor, grandmother!" cries the other. "That's absurd, Suckle! Let me get you a cup of tea, and——"

"I couldn't dwink tea," interposes Mr. Suckoothumb; "it would make me sick. I—I couldn't eat or dwink anything."

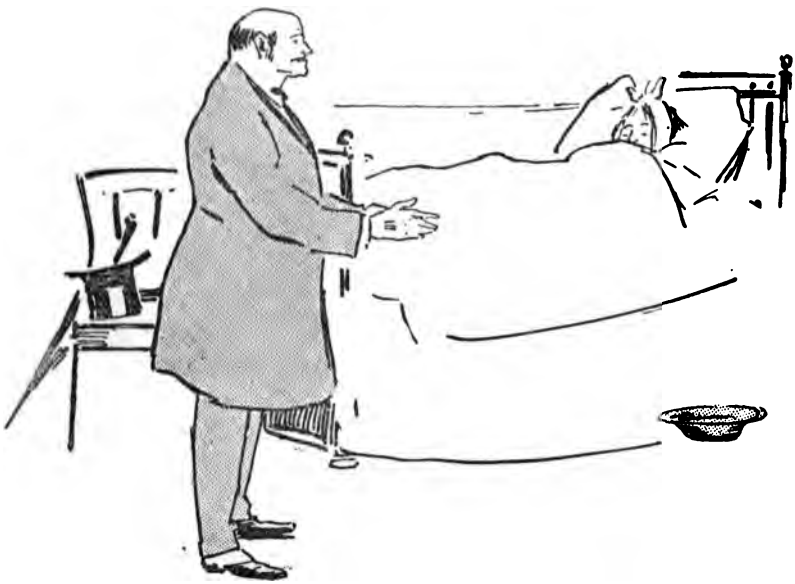
"That's bosh! You should *try*. Food is the only remedy for coppers."

"I don't know anything about *coppers*," retorts Mr. Suckoothumb peevishly. "All I do know is that my head's as heavy as *lead*, and I wish you'd go away, and do as I intweat you. It is my last wequest. In a vewy few hours I shall be wemote from this sublunawy sphere, and, and"—with a sob —"Sillifant Hall will become the pwospective pwoperty of my cousin, Wobert Sillifant."

"It's downright humbug," answers Mr. Tumbuster; "but, as you wish it, I'll go and fetch a doctor, and then, if he thinks it necessary, I'll promise you Lady Sillifant shall be telegraphed for." This to humour Mr. Suckoothumb, whose condition seems much that of a fractious baby with a pain in its centre of gravity.

In about half an hour he has succeeded, under the direction of the head waiter, who grins sardonically, in discovering the whereabouts of a certain Dr. Bolose, a local physician of celebrity. The doctor very considerately condescends to pay a flying visit to "The Mitre" at once (although by so doing he inconveniences a whole room-full of expectant patients), and accordingly is duly ushered by Mr. Tumbuster into Mr. Suckoothumb's chamber, and confronts the invalid.

"Well," says Dr. Bolose, rubbing his hands with charming self-satisfaction; "and what is the matter with your young friend, sir?" This, of course, to Mr. Tumbuster, inasmuch as the patient lies apparently lifeless.



"A bad case of hot coppers," replies that gentleman, coming to the point without periphrasis. "We were at a party last night in St. Aldate's, and he went in too heavily for gin punch."

"And Oxford port?" inquires Dr. Bolose, knowingly.

"Oh, yes; port, sherry, claret, and that sort of thing," replies Mr. Tumbuster, in a delightfully off-hand style.

"Quite so, quite so. Let me feel your pulse, if you please, Mr.—Mr.—Suckoothumb."

"Sillifant Suckoothumb," suggests Mr. Tumbuster.

"Quite so—Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb. Yes, there is fever, considerable fever, coupled with the usual symptoms. I will write a prescription, which must be made up and taken at once. You may give him, sir, a little weak brandy and water, and some dry toast—nothing else. Let him keep quiet, and I will call in the course of the evening."

"Do you consider, sir," asks Mr. Suckoothumb, suddenly exhibiting something like vivacity, "on your weputation as a pwofessional pwactitioner, that there is any sewious danger?"

Dr. Bolose smiles, but whether sarcastically or encouragingly it would be hard to say. His smile, like the postmen's boots, is suited to the length of everybody's foot.

"I do not apprehend any immediate cause for alarm," he answers with apparent

caution. "You must keep quiet, and adopt my regimen."

"What's a wegimen?" inquires Mr. Suckoothumb vacuously.

Again Dr. Bolose extracts the stereotyped smile. "The prescription, sir, I have written, and the diet I have enjoined," he responds with great dignity of tone and manner.

"I—I wish you would pwescwibe," urges Mr. Suckoothumb, "that my gwandma be telegwaphed for at once."

This time Dr. Bolose very nearly laughs. He has not run such a risk of violating his placidity for years past.

"No, no," he says, "that would be quite unnecessary and hardly kind, if, as I may assume, she is an elderly lady. Don't be out of heart about yourself, Mr. Suckoothumb. Believe me, you are not the first who has been imprudent on the subject of intoxicating fluids, and you will not be the last; a few hours' sleep will doubtless effect a beneficial change. Good day to you, gentlemen. I will call in the evening, and shall expect to find a marked improvement; yes, a marked improvement."

"That doctor," growls Mr. Suckoothumb sulkily, as the door closes, "is evidently an

ignowant adventuwer. I've a gweat mind not to take his dwaught."

"What makes you say so?" asks Mr. Tumbuster curiously.

"Because," rejoins Mr. Suckoothumb, "he never once expwessed a wish to see my tongue. A doctor who doesn't ask to examine your tongue must be wholly ignowant of the gwammar of his pwofession."

"Skittles!" retorts Mr. Tumbuster contemptuously.

"My gwandma," observes Mr. Suckoothumb, "employs thwee doctors at Sillifant, and thwee in London, so I ought to know something about medicine, though I ain't in the pwofession."

Not caring to argue this point, Mr. Tumbuster at once departs, and proceeding promptly to the nearest chemist's shop, hands Dr. Bolose's prescription across the counter, and requests to have it made up.

"Look here, I say," he observes to the shopman, "I'll wait whilst you concoct the medicine. Only, I say, just make it up as palatable as you can, for the fellow it's for is an awful ass, and he won't swallow it if it happens to be nasty."

In the wisdom of this advice the tradesman readily acquiesces. The prescription

is duly made up, charged for at a rate Mr. Tumbuster regards as excessive, and the cost thereof paid. Then Mr. Tumbuster, armed with the precious lenitive, retraces his steps towards "The Mitre," and, with a few rapid bounds, gains the second floor, whereon is situate the sick chamber. To his surprise Mr. Suckoothumb in his absence has dropped off into a heavy sleep, and is blowing the ophicleide with his nose.

"That's the best medicine of all," he soliloquises; "I won't disturb the poor beggar. Let him snooze it off." Moreover, acting on this common-sense notion, he deposits the medicine, which consists of pills and a draught, on the dressing table, emerges softly from the room, and departs to seek Mr. Steptoe.

"Hullo!" he exclaims, as, on entering the coffee-room, he discovers that gentleman seated in front of a pot of tea, with a handkerchief bound round his temples. "Why, what, another cripple?"

"*Quot homines tot sententiæ*," answers Mr. Steptoe doggedly. His countenance, Mr. Tumbuster remarks, looks somehow greenish, and his eyelids as if somebody had been fridging them with a hardish tooth brush.

"What became of you last night?" asks

Mr. Tumbuster. "You suddenly disappeared from Flygilloway's in a manner which in any one else I should have called rude. This was comparatively early in the evening, and yet, when I got back here, and inquired of the waiter if you had turned up, he could give no account of you whatever."

"That's rum," responds Mr. Steptoe; "for hang me if I know what became of me."

"You don't?"

"Upon my honour I don't. I found myself this morning somewhere out in the country, in the middle of a field, and deuced cold."

"By George, what a start! However, you ain't anything like as bad as poor Suckle. I've just fetched a doctor to him."

"I floored a good lot too!" rejoins Mr. Steptoe, with the air of one who declines to sacrifice his *amour propre*.

"No doubt of it. But I say, Step, don't you think you owe just a trifle of an apology to my friend Flygilloway for levanting without so much as wishing him good-night, and that after his profuse hospitality—eh?"

"*Quot hom*—" begins Mr. Steptoe like a parrot.

"Oh, bother that," cuts in Mr. Tumbuster. "The straight tip, if you please."

" I don't mind apologising," remarks Mr. Steptoe stolidly. " Civility's cheap. I'd apologise for ten minutes without stopping for a swig of that same supernacular gin punch at this particular moment."

" That's good," responds Mr. Tumbuster. " Remove the rag from your head, then, and we'll stroll down to St. Aldate's and dig out Fly. I could digest a glass of their buttery beer myself."

One can't be expected to write a complete biography of everybody. The Muse, therefore, to put it fine, presents her respectful compliments to the general public, and begs to decline dogging the footsteps of Messrs. Tumbuster and Steptoe as far as St. Aldate's College. Let it suffice that they are lucky enough to find Mr. Flygilloway " at home," and in capital cue; that, incited by his wholesome example, they pitch into a colossal luncheon, and enjoy themselves thoroughly; and that, having further regaled themselves with tobacco, they return, like giants refreshed, to " The Mitre" in order to pack up their *impedimenta* and depart from the city of spires by an evening train.

" Let us have a look at poor Suckle," suggests Mr. Tumbuster.

" *Omni corde meo*," responds Mr.

Steptoe, gaily; and, accordingly, upstairs they bolt, and enter Mr. Suckoothumb's chamber pell mell, with a loud inquiry on their lips as to how he is.

Mr. Suckoothumb in the interim has arisen from his couch, and appears washed and dressed. He is seated in an old fashioned arm chair, with a railway rug over his knees, and a pillow at the back of his head. Moreover, his usually weak countenance seems to have acquired strength, owing to the preternaturally grave expression it wears.

"I've had a merciful escape!" he gasps forth, addressing Mr. Tumbuster.

"The dog fiend!" cries that gentleman cheerily. "There's never been anything worse the matter with you than red hot coppers!"

"I don't understand your imagewy," replies Mr. Suckoothumb with dismal solemnity. "What I meant to infer was that that ignowant charlatan, Dr. Bolose, has twied to tamper most sewiously with my constitution. Pwovidentially my gwandma has instwucted me in a little medicine, and I wasn't to be duped."

"Eh, what?" exclaim simultaneously Messrs. Steptoe and Tumbuster in genuine amazement.

"Look here, sir!" almost yells Mr. Suckoothumb, his pale features reddening with anger. "Look here, sir, at these pills! Let me ask you, did you ever witness such a shameless attempt to destwoy the constitution of a young man with mercuwy?"

Mr. Tumbuster seems fairly puzzled. Then he advances to the table and takes up Dr. Bolose's prescription gingerly.

"I have written," continues Mr. Suckoothumb ferociously, "to that murdewous impostor to dismiss him. I have told him that he deserves pwosecution in a court of law, and that he may consider himself lucky in escaping the exposure his abominable tweatment wichly mewits."

"But," urges Mr. Tumbuster, who is still apparently in a state of hopeless perplexity, "I don't understand. I asked the chemist who made up the medicine what the ingredients were, and he certainly never so much as mentioned mercury."

"Then," cries Mr. Suckoothumb, "you must have been blind if you are not deaf. Just look at the pills, sir!"

"Well?" observes Mr. Tumbuster, gazing at the pill box intelligently.

"Well!" echoes Mr. Suckoothumb. "Its ill, I think. I never met before with

such unblushing effwontewy. Why, they're *solid* mercuwy ! "

Mr. Tumbuster gazes very hard upon Mr. Suckoothumb for an instant ; then something seems to dawn suddenly upon his brain, for he sits down on the side of the bed and literally roars with laughter for a good three minutes.

" So you *dismissed* Dr. Bolose ? " he cries, mirthfully enough.

" Of course I did. There's nothing widiculous, is there, in self-pwotection ? I wasn't going to be poisoned."

At this Mr. Tumbuster laughs even louder. " Tell me," he asks, " did you swallow the doctor's draught ? "

" Evewy single dwop. I did so before I had opened the pill box."

" And you felt better, I suppose, after you had taken it ? "

" Vewy much better indeed—quite a diffewent being."

" Well, then, if you found his draught so decidedly beneficial, why couldn't you give him credit for his pills ? "

" Give cwedit to mercuwy ! " vociferates Mr. Suckoothumb. " Why, you must be mad ! Would you wish to intwoduce into your system a matewial which will cause your teeth to tumble out, and the vewy tip of your nose to dwop off ? "

"*Quot homines,*" puts in Mr. Steptoe sagely.

"I wish, sir," remarks Mr. Suckoothumb testily, turning round to face Mr. Steptoe, "that you'd expwess, for the future, that favouwite sentiment of yours in English. I pwefer the vernacular to the slang of the ancient Latins!"

"Brayvo!" exclaims Mr. Tumbuster; "well put, Suckle! But about this mercury. Who told you those pills there on the table contain mercury?"

"The evidence of my senses," replies Mr. Suckoothumb stoutly. "They must contain twenty gwains a piece."

"Very good. Let us assume that they do so. Forty grains of mercury will kill a man, I should say. Am I right?"

"Quite wight. Perfectly cowwect!"

"Now I'll bet you a sovereign that I'll take a brace of those pills. Put your money on the table and here goes!"

"I—I haven't got a soveweign to spare," objects Mr. Suckoothumb testily. "Besides, I would not for the world encouwage dangewous pwactical jokes. Of the two I think I would far wather that you lived than died."

"Thanks!" responds Mr. Tumbuster, "for your kind consideration. However,

as you won't go in for a sportive venture, suffer me to open your eyes. These pills don't contain one single particle of mercury."

"But they are mercuwy, and nothing but mercuwy," retorts Mr. Suckoothumb savagely.

Whereupon Mr. Tumbuster extracts deliberately one of these offending globes from the box, and with the corner of his nail removes a portion of its surface. "Now," says he, "do you alter your opinion, my good Suckle?"

"It's vewy extwaordinawy and incompwehensible!"

"Nothing of the sort. The fact is, I requested the chemist to make your medicine as palatable as he could for you, and therefore, to preserve you from superfluous nausea, he *silvered the pills!!!*"

"And they're not mercuwy, after all?"

"Deuce a bit, my boy! And, what's more, old Bolose isn't a charlatan, an impostor, a murderer, or an ignoramus, but a precious clever old customer, or he wouldn't have been able to pull round such a corpse as you were this morning in so short a time."

"I—I'll persuade my gwandma to wite

him an apology and send him an extwa fee when I get home," murmurs Mr. Suckoothumb, very crestfallen at the absurd error in which his hasty generalisation had involved him.

Just then there sounds a tap at the door, and, presto! the boots enters, bearing a missive addressed, in an exceedingly Grecian style of caligraphy, to "Sillifant Suckoothumb, Esqre., 'The Mitre.'"

"Upon my sacwed honour!" he exclaims, after glancing at this effusion; "life in Oxford seems to be nothing else but a comedy, or wather twagedy, of ewwors!"

Mr. Tumbuster, to whom he has shied across the communication in question, reads as follows:—

"Mr. Swat presents his compliments to Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb, and begs to return the enclosed, which has apparently been transposed from its intended cover. Mr. Swat will further feel obliged by an explanation of the reasons which have caused Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb to remain in Oxford in contradiction to the express injunction of his college authorities.

"St. Aldate's College, Oxford."

"He! he! he!" roars Mr. S. S., half defiantly, half ruefully. "It's like a *chassée cwoissée* in a quadwille. The letter to Mr.

Swat has gone to my gwandma, and the letter to my gwandma has gone to Mr. Swat!"

"A sweet pretty kettle of fish!" cries Mr. Tumbuster dubiously.

"But you made me tell Mr. Swat all sorts of storwies," falters our hero, looking sheepish enough, "and my dear gwandma will wead them and find out that I have been deceiving her."

"That's awkward," soliloquises Mr. Tumbuster, "very much awkward; and the worst of it is, your capacity for invention is undeveloped, my Suckle, and you haven't yet learnt the naughty art of saving a cropper by telling a wopper."

"Or," suggests Mr. Steptoe, "of dodging a stumper by broaching a thumper."

"It's all the same. *Quot sententiæ*, as your master taught you, Step," rejoins Mr. Tumbuster. "My advice to you, therefore, Suckle, is to go in a buster for veracity."

"Plenary confession," adds Mr. Steptoe, satirically, "always merits absolution."

"I—I shouldn't quite welish," observes Mr. Suckoothumb, "informing my gwandma that I was in a condition bordewing on dwunkenness, because that would injure my pwospects. I think I'll tell her that I had the misfortune to eat too many sausages

for dinner, and was in consequence seized with a biliawy disawwangement and obliged to call in Dr. Bolose."

Here the narrative and narrator must part company. We will, if you please,

therefore endeavour to imagine our triad of freshmen safely out of Oxford; and especially Mr. Sillifant Suckoothumb in the bosom of his family, the idol of his fond grandmamma, who calls him "her naughty

baby," and treats him rather as if he were a perfectly developed embryo in long clothes than a full grown, whisker-cultivating young man, who, under more propitious circumstances, might even now be the exultant parent of at least a brace of twins.

"Dearey me," cried that lady. "What an ordeal my baby must have gone through! It looks quite ill!"

HOW MR. PENLAKE "EXERCISED" AUTHORITY

In the year of grace 18—, it pleased the ancient House of Congregation, then dominating the University of Oxford, to enact in dog-Latin, that whereas candidates for Responsions—vulgarly called "Smalls"—had hitherto paid the fee of one pound for the rare privilege of being plucked, or passed, in future the charge to each undergrad solicitous of responding—whatever that may mean—would be raised to a guinea.

Shortly after the promulgation of this solemn decree, a notice appeared on every buttery-hatch to the effect, that the Senior Proctor would attend in the Hall of St. Magnus College between the hours of one and two on the Friday following, in order to receive the names of candidates, who were required to produce their matriculation certificates as proof of identity.

Obediently to this summons some four hundred youngsters, solemnly attired in the regulation academical costume, assembled in the hall aforesaid, wherein, on the dais, posed majestically the Senior Proctor, engaged in a paradoxical attempt to Latinise the Saxon prononusia of Browns, Robinsons, *et cie.*

"Your name and college, sir?" snapped the functionary at an elegant stripling.

"Flibberty Gibbet, of Brasenface," was the intelligible reply; whereupon down went the name of that polished gentleman as, "Gibbet, Flibertisius é Coll.: Qu: Fac:" Gibbet, you will remark, as being incapable of Latinisation, was permitted to remain in its native cacophony.

"A guinea!" grunted the official with a yawn, and Mr. Gibbet, having come armed with the sum, planked it down smilingly, and departed with a devout prayer that the examiners would overlook very Oxonian Euclid, and exceedingly imperfect arithmetic—his exercises in that most vulgar of all sciences having hitherto been confined to the study of odds.

To him succeeded a party, whose sporting costume afforded a striking contrast to the Benedictine habit, yclept a commoner's

gown. He announced himself curtly as Richard Penlake, and of the same college as Mr. Gibbet. This respectable patronymic, after being amplified so as to fit the mediæval diction of the University, was duly entered by the Proctor. Looking over that dignitary's shoulder to see that there was no mistake about it, Mr. Penlake proceeded carelessly to extract a sovereign from his trousers' pocket. Then, uttering a sub-audible aspiration for luck, he flung it magnificently on the table with the sublime air of one paying away money which was not of the slightest consequence.

"A guinea, sir, if you please!" protested the Proctor, looking rather foolishly at the sovereign and a trifle angrily at Mr. Penlake.

"The fee's a pound," replied that gentleman firmly.

"The fee," retorted the Proctor, "is a guinea."

"But," urged Mr. Penlake, appealing to the crowd of undergrads around him, "*I've always been accustomed to pay a pound!*"

At this sally there arose Homeric laughter. Mr. Penlake happened to be known as a candidate who had already made many attempts to respond—albeit unfortunately without success. As a matter of con-

temporary history he had already paid in fees very many pounds to an inappreciative University, which, somehow, does not make a practice of returning fees to those whom the examiners in their discretion see fit to reject.

"Silence!" roared the Proctor, rising suddenly, like an exasperated crow. Then turning to the object of this merriment: "A shilling, or I shall erase your name from the list!"

Mr. Penlake fumbled, first in one pocket, then in another; but although various properties, such as fusees, a pipe, a tooth pick, and a watch appeared in evidence, the coin of the realm was conspicuous by its absence. In dire perplexity he right-about-faced with: "Look here. This is my last chance. Will one of you fellows lend me a bob?"

In a trice a dozen hands proferred the needful coin. Whereupon, with an ejaculated "Thanks!" Mr. Penlake majestically deposited the shilling by the side of the sovereign on the table.

"Next time, sir," observed the Proctor, with grim satire, "you will please remember a guinea!"

"*Next time*, sir," rejoined Mr. Penlake, "I propose to give the University of Cambridge a turn."

Whereat, authority reddened, and the audience tittered—a general impression prevailing that there might be a "next time." Mr. Penlake himself thought otherwise, registering the resolve of immortal "Adolphus Smalls" to "put on coaches three, and read all night with towelled head." But that was not all. A sarcastic Proctor had raised the laugh against him, and he ed him one. Moreover, a man to pay

his debts was Ricardus Penlake é Coll: Æn: Fac:

For this gay youth, however idle and indebted, need not be condemned as a dunce. The great Sir Robert Peel, the learned Earl of Selborne, and a host of other strong men have failed in this very examination, yet afterwards attained distinction, alike in Oxford and in the world; indeed, a pluck often operates happily as an antidote to conceit, especially in the case of paragons fresh from the plaudits of a public school, and inclined to deify their budding brains. Neither should any such accident be regarded as a disgrace. It remains on record, that a trio in one of our best colleges —all being gentlemen *par sang*—achieved the mighty total of twenty-seven plucks between them; yet, having once graduated, became useful pillars of the Church, who might easily have challenged comparison with the mammoths of the honour list. Early failure operated as a stimulant.

To return to Mr. Penlake. He, too, was put on his mettle by this little brush with proctorial autocracy. Men roared over the habit he had acquired of paying a pound for the honour of being plucked, and the 'Varsity relishes a story with a point to it. Our hero, moreover, lacked not that species

of euphemism which will compel a man to join heartily in a laugh against himself, and had the wit to perceive that, under the circumstances, a seventh plough would stultify him. Consequently, he put his back into his books, converting Sunday into a working day and midnight into mid-day. He cut all festive gatherings, eschewed fluids, from champagne to small beer; whereby, somehow, his previous desultory reading took shape, and when at last in the "cockpit," face to face with the Reverends Rhadamanthus, Œacus, *et cie*, he glanced at the questions on paper, they seemed as mere child's play. Simply, he floored the lot, not excepting the degrading arithmetic and puzzle-monkey euclid, and having fought the battle of vivâ voce gloriously, emerged a victor.

"Now," murmured he, as Purdue, the Clerk of the Schools, handed him his *testamur*, "to square that little account with my friend, the Proctor."

About the date of this veracious history a certain Monsieur Le Cocq had just retired from the position of *cordon blue* at St. Boniface. Babbling echo had it, that the Gallic artiste differed with the master of that College, a martinet of the first water. Suffice it that Monsieur had transferred his

exceptional ability from the St. Boniface kitchen to a restaurant in the High, which immediately became the focus of juvenile *gourmandise*. Had the superlative *chef* been allowed a fair field and no favour, beyond a doubt he would rapidly have amassed a small fortune. As it was, his enterprise was crushed *in limine*. The Vice-Chancellor, albeit the pink of courtesy, was by no means disposed to relax the Laudian code, which enacted that junior members of the University should dine only in the bosom of their respective colleges. To him gastronomy, except, of course, among heads of houses and regent masters, amounted to the violation of some hitherto undiscovered article of the decalogue; hence, shortly after the institution of the Restaurant Le Cocq, he was down upon its proprietor.

"I understand," said he, "that you have infringed the Statute which provides that no tradesman shall sell to any member of the University *in statu pupillari* cooked meats?"

"You vould not 'ave me serve ze gentlemans vid raw?" urged Monsieur in self-defence.

Whereunto the V.C. responded by inflicting a sconce, Anglice a fine, and the great Le Cocq fled from the august

personage's presence disgusted with such an exhibition of petty tyranny.

Now it so happened on his return from interviewing the superb V.C., that Monsieur encountered Mr. Penlake, his features exuberant with joviality as he waved his *testamur* in triumph.

"Look here, Le Cocq," he cried, "look at these signatures (*i.e.*, the examiners'). Rare, sir, very rare! Talk about the autographs of Shakespeare, Milton, Guy Fawkes, Oliver Cromwell, Nell Gwynne, Napoleon, and that lot—they're nothing to these, simply nothing! Le Cocq, to celebrate this solemn occasion I must dine — sumptuously, mind you — all the delicacies of the season—expense no object —seven o'clock sharp—you understand—ta! ta! Le Cocq!"

Then, without waiting for the good Frenchman's reply, Mr. Penlake darted off, and was soon buried in the recesses of a hairdresser's establishment, from whence he emerged the bearer of a largish brown paper parcel.

Next he wended his way to the emporium of a reputable firm of tailors, where he exchanged his commoner's for a scholar's gown, to the utter amazement of the foreman, who, to quote his own phraseology,

"allers give Mister Penlake *credit* for being a genelum, but not for being a schollard." (N.B.—The credit part of the business may have been only too true, inasmuch as it occupied the entire page of a huge ledger, the total running to three figures.) A warm bath, a glass of bitters, a shampoo, and a game of billiards made up the time to seven o'clock, when Mr. Penlake duly presented himself at the door of the Restaurant Le Cocq, endowed with the exaltation of a Derby winner, and the appetite of a fasting ostrich.

"Dinner, sir?" bowed an obsequious waiter. "Yessir. Fust pair, left."

Upstairs lumbered Mr. Penlake, mouth open and ready to do full justice to the very best feed in Oxford. He thought he heard a titter on the stairs; but it did not disturb a philosophical equanimity. The room looked bright and cheery, and his feelings were those of a man at peace with all the world except the Proctor.

"What will you drink, sir?" asked the waiter, reappearing with just the suspicion of a grin on his features.

"Sham, Charles, sham—dry—that will do to start with; and, I say, Charles, do look sharp!"

Again, the echo of a titter. However,

Charles rapidly produced a bottle of Perrier-Jouet, the cork whereof he extracted in rather a bungling fashion. Could it be that the fellow was laughing ? As he placed the bottle on the table he remarked with an effort at *sang froid* :

" M. Le Cocq, sir, very sorry, sir, no soup. Will you have up the salmon ? "

A fiery expletive rose to the tip of Mr. Penlake's tongue, but was suppressed in favour of an impatient remark, that what they brought mattered little, so long as they did not keep him waiting. When an undergrad is ravenous, *bis dat qui cito.*

Clank, clank of the plates ; and, presto ! the salmon entered bedecked with parsley ; while Charles made a rapid exit to conceal the laughter which was shaking both his sides.

" What, what the d—doose ! " ejaculated Mr. Penlake, as he endeavoured to help himself with a fish-slice, which somehow would not penetrate. " Why, I'm dashed, if the beastly fish isn't raw ! "

With a single bound he reached the bell rope, and pulled until it yielded with a crack. He was about to inflict condign punishment on the luckless Charles, whose shouts of mirth resounded in the passage, when, with a serious countenance, enter no

less a personage than the great Monsieur Le Cocq himself.

"*Plait il, M'sieur?*"—imperturbably.

"Look here, Le Cocq, this is some confounded practical joke of Charles!"

"Hein, non! I 'ave bin, vot you call sconzed by your Vize-Chanzellaire. He say I not geef ze gentlemans cooked mead. Hein! Zo I obey ze Stadudes, and geef zem raw! Zo!"

"But I can't make myself a cannibal or a German," exclaimed Mr. Penlake. "And I'm doosid hungry, don't you know? Upon honour, I am, Le Cocq!"

"Bud you musd obey ze Stadudes of ze Univairsite."

"Hang the Statutes! I suppose the Senior Proctor hauled you up before the Vice? Hey?"

"Yace," muttered Le Cocq, "it vos 'im!"

Whereupon Mr. Penlake took Monsieur by the button-hole, and forthwith opened up confidences, causing much amusement both to speaker and auditor. He was in effect revealing a little scheme for taking a rise out of their mutual enemy, the don with the black velvet sleeves.

"Goot, goot, vare goot!" exploded the Frenchman. "Yace, yace, you shall 'ave

some cooked meads for dinner—in faive min'tes, M'sieur Penlake. Bud, if zey sconze me for ze mead not raw, you pay."

"That's a firm bargain!" was the ready reply.

Accordingly, within the stated five minutes, Charles, profoundly apologetic, was engaged in serving a hungry gentleman with a delectable *menu*. Soup, somehow, was discovered, the salmon re-appeared done to a turn, *entrées*, artistically compounded, succeeded, and in one word repletion was satisfactorily attained within forty-five minutes after deglutition commenced.

To champagne was superadded claret, coffee, curacoa, cigars. By the time that Great Tom was booming his hundred and one discords, to announce the hour of nine, Mr. Penlake felt himself pleasant, a trifle larky, but very far off the inebriate stage. A soda and B. completed the programme, whereafter,conscious of being absolutely fit, he congratulated himself and prepared for action. First, he took his innocent trencher cap and smashed it to a jelly. Secondly, he slewed his tie round to the back of his ear. Thirdly, he extracted from the beforementioned brown paper parcel a beard and moustache of copious dimen-

sions, with which appendages he invested his own smooth countenance. Lastly, he super-imposed his battered cap, doffed the scholar's gown, and after lighting a fresh cigar, carefully scented himself by sprinkling brandy over beard, shirt-front and clothes indiscriminately.

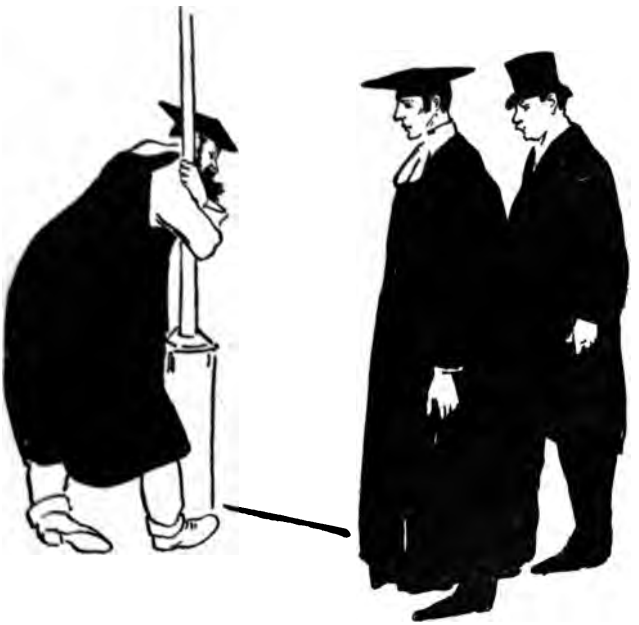
Having surveyed his *mise en scéne* in the mirror, and feeling assured that he simulated intoxication by its outward and visible signs, he ordered Charles to keep watch as to when the Proctor was going his rounds.

At this point it may be advisable to inform the reader, unacquainted with the idiosyncrasies of academic life, that the Proctors are magistrates pretty much irresponsible, who, in either University town, can enter houses forcibly, dispense with *habeas corpus*, and commit people to prison without the formula of a trial. These privileges they exercise most freely after dark, their custom being to perambulate Oxford by gas-light attended by an officer styled the University Marshal, and a *posse comitatus*, nicknamed "bull-dogs."

After waiting nearly an hour Mr. Penlake was duly informed by his faithful outpost, that the Proctor might be espied sheering down the High, having just benevolently

invaded "The Mitre" to stop a quiet supper party.

On receipt of this intelligence our hero staggered forth into the High Street, and affectionately embracing the nearest lamp



post, vociferated *ore rotundo* a music-hall ditty, in order to secure immediate attention.

Authority, thus directly challenged, bore down promptly on this amazing moral

spectacle. Nothing daunted, Mr. Penlake persevered with his hiccupping strain, stopping only to whiff a cigar, a luxury, as all Oxford knows, regarded by the University as more heinous than the aggregate of sins contained in the decalogue. Do not the Laudian Statutes contain a vehement counterblast against the *herba nicotiana, sive tobacco?*

"Your name and college, sir?" demanded the Proctor, sternly.

Mr. Penlake muttered something thickly and inaudibly, blowing a volume of the *herba nicotiana* in the outraged face of his superior.

"Your name, sir? Your college, sir?"

"En'l—Woosher."

"Ennel, of Worcester, do you say?"

"Schpel with a b'—bubb—b, old boy," gurgled the hardened Mr. Penlake.

"Bennel? Then, Mr. Bennel, what business have you to appear in this disgusting state of intoxication? Go home to your College at once, sir, and call upon me at ten to-morrow morning."

"I think, sir," whispered the University Marshal, "that the gentleman is not quite fit to take care of himself."

This hypothesis apparently contained a strong element of probability, inasmuch as

Mr. Penlake continued to cling incontinently to the lamp post, as if in need of support.

"We had better take him to Worcester," growled the Proctor, by no means in the tone of one who relished a march of a good half mile with an inebriate. The order having been given was, of course, obeyed. A brace of "bull-dogs" advancing, grappled Mr. Penlake's arms with the design of assisting him to walk.

But their man did not mean this tame-cat method of progressing. Struggling and lurching, he at last, by the force of dead weight, tumbled his corpus in the gutter. This, naturally, proved a little too much for the temper of a philosophical Proctor. "Carry him!" he shouted in a voice tremulous with indignation. Thus it came to pass that a solemn procession was formed, and the word to march having been given, the "bull-dogs" bore the recumbent form of Mr. Penlake to Worcester, depositing it comfortably at the College gate. But the porter on being summoned, disavowed all knowledge of any such person as Mr. Bennel. No name thereunto similar adorned the books of Worcester College.

"You have prevaricated," shouted the Proctor. "Tell me at once your College, or it will be the worse for you."

"M—Maudlin."

"Then why did you say Worcester?"

"I never shed Woosher. I shed Mum—Maudlin."

There was nothing for it but to resume their march. For the benefit of the reader unacquainted with the geography of Oxford, we may state, that Magdalen happens to be distant from Worcester a mile and a little over.

"Dear, dear!" yawned the unlucky Proctor, "I'm downright tired to death, and besides, it's getting late. This is very, very annoying!"

Tramp, tramp, down Beaumont Street, Broad Street, Holywell, Long Wall. At length Magdalen was reached, the "bull-dogs" puffing and blowing like grampuses with the weight of Mr. Penlake's form. By the way, he had somewhat enlivened the monotony of a long journey with a selection of songs, not all of which were peculiarly adapted to the ladylike ears of a philosophical Proctor.

When they summoned the janitor of Waynflete's magnificent foundation, Mr. 'Ennel, alias Bennel, was indignantly repudiated. "Our gents," protested the loyal functionary, "knows 'ow to carry their liquors!"—for which conclusive reason a man unable to preserve the perpendicular,

could not possibly belong to Magdalen. Q. E. D.

What in the name of wonder was to be done? The victim of excessive fluid seemed to be quite too idiotically intipsified to be guilty of a practical joke. However, authority began to entertain suspicions.

"If, sir, you don't tell me, sir, your true name and college, I'll expel you, sir, from the University, sir!"

These terrific words almost deafened Mr. Penlake's ears.

"Whash use of makin' sush row? You leave me 'lone and I'll go schtrait to St. Johnsh.''

"So, after all, St. John's is your college? Very good, sir, very good! I'll give you a lesson not to tamper with a Proctor again."

Mr. Penlake was acting with some *nous*. He meant to indulge his enemy with a spell of walking exercise. For this reason he mentioned the names of colleges remotely distant from each other, thereby entailing upon the weary official and his myrmidons the maximum of hard work.

But the "bull-dogs"—never the sweetest tempered of their species—failed to see the joke of all this. In dire dudgeon the entire party retraced their steps to St. Giles, and after a series of stoppages, owing to the

solid form of Mr. Penlake proving a few pounds too much for his bearers, eventually reached the gateway of St. John's College, where, as in previous instances, the porter repudiated their prisoner. At this point the "bull-dogs" began to protest their physical inability to act as beasts of burden beyond the limits of reason. So a council of war was held, Mr. P. *ad interim* being bumped down on the pavement with something like savage ferocity. The Marshal, supposed to know every undergrad by sight, opined the object reposing before them with a tendency to snore belonged to Christ Church. On the other hand, one imaginative "bull-dog" could swear that he had played in the Merton eleven, while another deposed to the effect that he had been seen wearing a surplice in New College Chapel. The Marshal's theory, as emanating from the Chief Constable of the University, prevailed; therefore, once more the human burden was hauled amid the muttered execrations of the "bull-dogs" to Canterbury Gate. Here the porter, instructed by a highly autocratic Dean to hold no parley with Proctors, slammed the door in their faces. This proved the last straw to break the camel's back. To the intense relief of his *posse comitatus*, Mr. Proctor at last did

what he might have done before, viz., pass the order to confine Mr. Penlake in the lock-up. The Marshal, however, ventured to hint that the gentleman in charge would thereby be associated with certain ladies of the baser sort, who, for actual or implied naughtinesses were temporarily confined in the University prison cell—a conjunction suggesting quite too awful eventualities to the moral instincts of a Marshal. The Proctor, however, had had enough of wild goose, and inasmuch as something must be done with this anonymuncule of no particular or ascertainable college preferred to put him under lock and key; accordingly the "bull-dogs," nothing loath, prepared to carry Mr. Penlake *da capo*. That gentleman, however, never contemplated anything like the discomfort, plus serious consequence, of imprisonment, to be followed by identification. He realised therefore that it had become necessary to escape from his present entanglement somehow. If crook could not be worked, he must try hook. His first move was to regain his legs.

"Feel berr'r. Will try and walk!"

"Why, sir, didn't you tell us your college?" whispered the Marshal confidentially.

Mr. Penlake winked.

Finding their man could actually retain the perpendicular, his custodians very readily allowed him the free use of his legs, retaining grip of his arms only. In this fashion the procession, followed languidly by the Proctor and Marshal, reached the quadrangle formed by the Bodleian, All Souls', B.N.C., and St. Mary's; in the centre whereof towers the dome of the Radcliffe. As they were passing the church, Mr. Penlake dexterously thrust one leg under the "bulldog" who held his right arm, thereby tripping him up. Then, by a quick movement, as one man fell he wrenched himself from the grasp of the other, and thus in a trice gained his liberty. Before the Marshal, who now comprehended the hoax, could seize his gown, he had bounded away at a pace suggesting a sprint runner, and while they were recovering their wits he was tearing down Brazenose Lane. Then he turned sharp into the Turl, making for the Broad, past Exeter. There, having completely distanced pursuit, he divested himself of beard and moustache, flung away his scholar's gown, twisted his tie into position, and then, with sublime effrontery, deliberately turned round to encounter his enemies in the Turl.

"Your name and college, sir?"

"Penlake, of Brazenface."

"Where is your gown, sir?"

"I've left it accidentally in Trinity."

"Did you meet a member of the University running in the Broad Street?"

"Yes, sir. A scholar with a big beard —about my height."

"Thank you, sir. Don't let me meet you again at this time of night without your gown."

Mr. Penlake bowed with superlative dignity and marched triumphantly to his college, where, at a supper of Bacchanalian festivity, he told his story to an admiring circle of friends.

Luckily for him, his enemy the Proctor went out of office at the end of term; for, as a matter of course it could but ooze out that the poly-collegio inebriate was really a member of the illustrious institution honoured by the world-wide reputation of Mr. Augustus Smalls. Indeed rumour had it that the good old head of B.F.C. was so delighted with a joke having been played upon a political opponent as to have in consequence awarded its perpetrator a valuable exhibition. Scandal no doubt, not to say *scandalum magnatum!* Anyhow, Mr. Penlake obtained an Honorary Fourth, graduating with credit to his "name and college."

ON SOME UNIVERSITY SPONGES

WE have not by us our great lexicographer ; nevertheless at the risk of logical obliquity I shall venture to define sponge as a parasitical growth of absorbent tendencies. The sponge proper to Oxford and Cambridge is not infrequently, paradox though it may sound, a gentleman as scrupulous about a revoke as the reverse in chronic trespass on the infirmity of social hospitality. The collective heart of a college may despise the type, yet towards the individual displays marvellous consideration. Men will suffer much from the polite larceny of the sponge, yet affect in his presence an impassibility worthy the most highly trained clairvoyante under the " influence " of her mesmerist.

Acquaintance with this ignoble octopus dates from the second day of your first term, and only ends with the penultimate hour of academical residence. Somehow the

creature recalls certain unsavoury reminiscences of your previous life. Can you forget, in the pristine days of small-boyhood, when a plethoric hamper arrived from an indulgent mother, how several disinterested

schoolfellows, up to that critical moment bullies and bogeys, suddenly and surprisingly developed sentiments towards you of affectionate admiration. Not until the bottomest strawberry had vanished from

the very last pot of jam, and the very crumbs had been devoured from the cake paper, did you learn your first real lesson. Bitter was that lesson to the sensitive simplicity of childhood. To think of magnanimous Sponge, who had buried the axe of the bully under the currants of good fellowship and the raisins of brotherly love —to think of Sponge, while the cake was yet in his mouth, the jam of your dear mother's manufacture adhering to his very gums, having the moral hardihood to apply without provocation and in a spirit of the basest ingratitude his heavy-soled leather boot to your physical extremities! To this hour one blushes for poor human nature, which could descend to such a bathos of depravity. And yet this episode of school, *mutatis mutandis*, has been repeated over and over again by grown-up schoolboys, whose kick can bruise, whose gorge is even larger than that of the hungriest urchin who ever acted a lie in order to gratify greediness. This identical Sponge, having attained to man's estate, proves amply Wordsworth's axiom that the "child is the father of the man." At the Universities especially we find him ubiquitous. In those centres of learned prodigality he finds a very eligible sphere for an acquisitive talent. There a gentleman

of dress and euphuism may live in three ways—at his own expense, at his tradesmen's expense, or at his friends' expense. The latter of these alternatives is by far the cheapest, and by no means unpleasant. Sponge adopts it as his own on principle. He permits himself to be influenced by no false delicacy, checked by no morbid sensibility. To a snub deaf, to an insult blind, in the presence of ill humour he remains consistently dumb. Humanitarian in breadth of thought, he is the dear friend of anyone who has money to spend, from the

well bred Etonian to the grammar school rough, from the scholar and wit to the dunce and dullard. Great, too, is his power of adaptability to the temper and taste of his numerous hosts. He can be horsey, boatey, crickety, billiardy, as occasion may serve. From the altitude of vestments, gregorians and incense, he can descend in a half second to the vagaries of the nonconformist conscience, or to agnostic cynicism. With one he will be as moral as Moses, with another as lubricious as Mr. Swinburne in his earlier mood. Thus he is truly all things to all men, if by any means he can tap the lot. To the port and sherry of the greenest fresher he will be a cod fish ; to his cigar box or cigarette case, a chimney. With gratitude he accepts Beaujolais when Moselle does not happen to be at hand, and will contentedly devour a commons of cold beef should *patè de fois* not be in evidence. In his stoical superiority to public opinion a certain dignified elevation may be observed, which were it only moral, might excite one's warmest admiration. Like his prototype, with the artificial calves and white stockings, he has to earn his bread philosophically. He dare not reject the powder of self-abasement. He must fetch and carry, make himself useful, accommodating, and

above all, agreeable. And if he enjoys an advantage over Jeames in being spared the badge of livery, he is infinitely worse off in having many masters to cajole and slaver.

Let it not be supposed that this special sponge presents a dead level of uniformity in respect of attributes. On the contrary, just as in the chemists' shop you may see specimens of all sorts—from the gigantesque bath sponge, warranted to hold a quart of fluid, down to the infinitesimal sponge glued on to the end of a stick, and about large enough to bathe a cat's eye, so in the miniature cosmos of the University you will discover very many varieties of the cap-and-gowned variety.

To take the most capacious of all, the bachelor of arts sponge. Four or five years of the sweets of academic residence have instructed this gentleman in many arts, of which he is now past-master, to wit—vingt et une, unlimited loo—*Consule Planco*, "bridge," like that of Vauxhall in the immortal ditty of "Guy Faux," it wasn't then invented—fives or rackets, billiards, more especially pool, for he is death on lives, bookmaking, and the judicious admixture of exhilarants, from Badminton to egg-flip, from bishop to champagne-cup. The man's training has been that of an Admirable

Crichton, and his all-round versatilities are held in admiration, not merely by raw youths, just fresh from school, but in a degree by such seniors as have not yet absorbed the counsels of social perfection. A powerful abettor of extravagance, personally your sponge cultivates a praiseworthy economy. He lives in very inexpensive lodgings, sufficiently remote from college, and is never to be found *chez lui* until after midnight.

We will endeavour to sketch one day in full term of the life of this ornament of society, and also approximately to quantify its cost to his fellow-creatures.

Being B.A., he finds himself released from irksome discipline. Neither the lecture-room nor the chapel demands the honour of his presence, and for him his college represents a convenient club-house. Whilst therefore the unwashed undergrad is yawning dismally through the ordeal of early prayers, he is perfecting a careful toilette in order to look pretty at the breakfast to which he is invited. Being the senior at that agreeable function, he takes *jure divino* the head of the table, and although not the host, in fact, devouring at that gentleman's expense, forthwith begins to magnify himself by terrorising the scouts. "What the

blank can Robert mean by giving him a cold plate ?" "Why didn't William have the common decency to hand him the plovers ?" "He can tell Dawson that he is not going to stand being fobbed off with a partially washed fork. Does Dawson mean to look him in the face and say that a fork like that is clean ? German silver, indeed ! German fiddle-de-dee !" Or perhaps from objurgation he turns to cold satire, remarking to Edward that "by Jove, some day he, Edward, shall give a breakfast to his brother scouts, when he, Mr. Sponge, will come and wait. And then, my gracious, do you suppose for a second, Edward, that I should ask you to sit down to table like a pig ? Hey ?" By this excess of language, which of course the scouts discount ninety-five per cent., he wins the evident reverence of three-fourths of the company present. His moral courage extorts absolute homage, for are not Dawson, William, and the rest the terror of their juvenile masters ? If only these fledglings possessed the superb daring of a Sponge ! But no. They may be endowed with the pluck that will face a demon bowler. They will perish rather than flinch from an opponent with gloves whose padding amounts to a mere colourable pretext, but in the august presence of that

latro, their scout, they quail; and in consequence, have to pay both in pocket and in comfort.

Having then established himself monarch of all he surveys, Mr. Sponge, with the pettiness peculiar to his species, turns on his entertainer. For, *bien entendu*, it is not his practice, like the faithful dog, to lick the hand that feeds him; he prefers to bite it. A glance at a gorgeous silver-gilt goblet adorning the centre of the table reveals its contents to be cyder-cup. In a loud and intrusive voice, therefore, he requests Jones, a model fresher, who is obviously over-eating himself *vis-a-vis* to that capacious ornament, borrowed for the occasion from the Junior Common-room, to pass *the champagne-cup!* Little Sparrow, the giver of this by no means parsimonious feed, whose papa happens to be an esurient Levite, almost sinks beneath the table as he falters a humble apology for the fluid being honest English cyder, instead of mendacious gooseberry. Poor Sparrow, he really cannot afford cyder, much less champagne, and Sponge knows this as well as anyone. It is doubly cruel of him, therefore, to assure the wincing youth, in a vein of satire that cannot miss the mark, that for his part he prefers cyder to champagne,

whereat there may be heard a sub-audible titter.

At length the gorge is accomplished; every one, including Mr. Sponge, having consumed just twice more food than appetite or digestion demands. With the cigars, therefore, it becomes a matter of policy to smoothe over the ruffled feathers of the indigent Sparrow, whose attempt to do in Rome as Rome does has been marred by a false economy in the matter of cyder. Mr. Sponge accordingly, having abased his victim, proceeds to pick him up, even to the level of exaltation, by broad compliments on his prowess as an oarsman. Disdaining to wrap up flattery in judicious circumlocution, he pours it as from a cornucopia. Sparrow, whose heart had gone down to his boots, after trying not to be mollified, ends by feeling downright fascinated. By this delicate manœuvre Mr. Sponge lands a second cigar, and when every one rushes off to lecture, suggests a soda and B, which Sparrow, being too weak-minded to refuse, sends for from the Common-room, his liberality being rewarded with some rather pointed chaff of the sort that the object must laugh at—if he can.

About eleven, Mr. Sponge, having kept unfortunate Sparrow from a lecture, render-

ing thereby a row with the junior tutor a matter of certainty—strolls into the quadrangle. As the clock strikes, there occurs a rush of men from lecture, whom of course he encounters.

Inter alios Jones, the modest and bashful. Now there is a big wine on to-night in the rooms of one Tompkins. Jones is engaged to that affair. Sponge has not the honour of an invitation, but he knows all about it. Hence the following brief dialogue.

SPONGE : " Jones, old fellow, I'm all alone to-night. Come and eat a bit of *tête a tête* dinner with me at ' The Mitre.' Half-past seven sharp. An eel, a larded capon. and a marrow-bone. That's all."

JONES (*flabbergasted by this unexpected honour*) : " Ah ! so sorry ; ah ! but I am engaged to Tompkins' wine, and that's just after hall—seven o'clock."

SPONGE (*frowning*) : " Confound Tompkins ! "

JONES (*seized with a happy thought*) : " Oh, I say, as I can't dine with you, won't you dine with me—in hall, you know ? "

SPONGE (*reflectively*) : " Hum. Yes, thanks. But what about Tompkins' wine ? "

JONES : " Why, you'll sit next to Tompkins, and of course he won't leave you out."

SPONGE: "You'd better cut Tompkins and dine with me."

JONES: "No; no. That would not do at all."

SPONGE (*resignedly*): "All right then. I'm your man."

Whereupon Jones exit to another lecture, pondering deeply in his mind as to whether Tompkins will relish his manœuvre. He knows that this party cherishes a sentiment of detestation for Sponge, though like the rest he rather dreads his tongue. Best perhaps explain the matter to Tompkins. Yes. That will put it straight. Quite!

In fine, Mr. Sponge had played his cards to win, and won!

Having thus breakfasted royally at the expense of Sparrow and being about to dine at the charges of Jones, and wine at those of Tompkins, it might be supposed that the most prehensile appetite would be satisfied. Not so. Mr. Sponge entertains a predilection in favour of luncheon, and there is the afternoon to be got through, agreeably if the fates permit. Ergo, whistling casually, and assuming his most debonnaire manner, he betakes himself to No. 5 staircase, back quad. A very safe draw indeed.

No. 5 is the crack staircase of the college, tenanted by gentry whose papas deem it

desirable that their sons should ruffle it with the best. The rooms in respect of height and area would have adorned Versailles, more particularly those on the first floor.

MR LUMPER READS

Thereto ascends our *alieni appetens*, and without the formality of a knock, swinging open a partially closed "oak," admits himself to the presence of Mr. Lumper. That

gentleman, reclining gracefully on a buoyant sofa, would appear to be performing a sort of eye trick, *i.e.*, reading simultaneously one book with one eye, and another with its fellow—in other words, Cicero in Latin, and the same author rendered into English by some poor wretch of a hack chartered by the firm of Bohn. While dodging from text to crib, and from crib to text, he may be observed puffing, or rather sucking, a pipe, which in respect of size might serve for water or gas, whilst from his mouth and the bowl in unison, issue volumes of smoke sufficient to obscure alike the Ciceronian periods and the travesty of that mighty orator. Needless to add, that under such conditions, Mr. Lumper's brain has become obfuscated; being so he jumps eagerly at a division of labour, and entreats Mr. Sponge to slowly expectorate the crib, while he endeavours to focus both eyes on the text. To this invitation—not quite unexpected—an affirmative could but be returned, and accordingly, coming to an anchor in a comfortable arm chair, Mr. Sponge proceeds to drone forth during the space of half-an-hour the drivel of Bohn. A little of that sort of discipline goes a long way, and at last the patience of Lumper being exhausted, the pair sally forth in search of a billiard

table. This, to the credit of the 'Varsity, is not so difficult to find at noon, or thereabouts. The loser of two games out of three, it is agreed, shall defray the cost of the table, but Mr. Sponge, whose play is known far and wide for its superiority, has to give his opponent twenty out of fifty points. At starting, the former knocks about the balls with wild incaution, so that Mr. Lumper romps in an easy victor. The second game shows Mr. Sponge to better advantage; indeed an onlooker would surmise that he might easily make a break of fifty, if he chose. Nevertheless, he allows Lumper, who has been waxing vainglorious, to run up to forty-eight before winning by a stroke that wears all the appearance of a fluke. Excited by this level game, Mr. Lumper now proposes to put a sovereign on the event. Sponge demurs, and consulting his watch, protests that it is already the witching hour of luncheon. Whereupon, not to be baulked, his friend exclaims, "Of course, you lunch with me! I've lots of cold fowl and that sort of thing." Whereunto Mr. Sponge responds, "Break away then," and the eager Lumper commences the new game by a badly placed miss whereof the other fails to take advantage, only, however, to find that a sovereign on

the game has caused Lumper to lose his head, for he places the balls over the pockets, all but cuts the cloth, and in his rage and fury simply gives his antagonist chance after chance. Result: Mr. Sponge does what he likes with the balls, and leaving Lumper twenty behind, pockets his money with well acted nonchalance.

At half-past one this *par nobile* find themselves back again in No. 5, disposing of cold chicken, tongue, *paté de fois gras*, pickled melon, and other delicacies. Robert, as Mercury in ordinary, draws the Moselle cork, decants the Amontillado, and makes himself generally useful. Mr. Lumper's wine glasses are tumblers, so the descent of fluids exceeds that of solids. They had just accomplished a satisfactory repast, when Robert introduced suddenly a lobster salad. He said he had forgotten it, but the verb to forget in Robertian parlance meant "reserve for his own delectation." It was incautious on his part to display so tempting a *plât*. He should have hidden it from mortal eye, inasmuch as the sight thereof caused Messrs. Lumper and Sponge to begin again, whereby his fondest hopes were simply dashed!

At this juncture, Mr. Sponge, ostrich although he was, began to feel incommoded

by the top button. Nor did even one of Benson's most fragrant cigars initiate digestion. Air therefore, if not exercise, would appear to be essential. Of the two, he preferred to avoid the latter. To secure which end, he set about in his usual diplomatic way.

SPONGE: "I say, Lumper, after your royal hospitality, I seem to want a brisk walk, or a game of fives."

LUMPER (*the laziest of his species*): "I detest walking, and fives even more. It hurts one's hands, you know, and that sort of thing."

SPONGE: "But it's so healthy, and—"

LUMPER (*terrified lest he should be bullied into either of the suggestions flung out by his companion*): "No, I really couldn't. Fives gives me heartburn, and walks resemble the treadmill. That reminds me. I told Tobin to send down his dog-cart at three. What do you say to a drive?"

SPONGE: "Couldn't be fitter. By the by, if it's Tobin's kicking mare, you'd best let me handle the ribbons."

LUMPER (*rather glumpsome*): "Of course, if you like. I don't much care—that is, don't you know!"

SPONGE (*helping himself* sans façon *to a third cigar*): "I'm on with you, Lump."

In other words, Mr. Sponge is to enjoy the amusement of driving, Mr. Lumper of paying. Indeed, so conscientiously careful is the latter of his own coin that he positively allows his victim to tip the ostler. Then, along the road he hints broadly at bitter beer, whereunto Mr. Lumper somehow fails to respond.

Leaving this genial pair to cover themselves *non indecoro pulvere* along the Witney Road, we may pause in our narrative and indulge in a little old morality. It may be all very proper for your Lumper, the heir of consols and other delights, to prepare himself for the responsibilities which opulence entails on a surfeit. But, if a man has to fight the battle with an adamantine world, the training should be less softening to the backbone. Take a Sparrow, a Jones, a Sponge, from the clover of Oxford, and stick them down to the *peine forte et dur* of a curacy or mastership in a school, what is the result ? The euphemism of the 'Varsity precious soon changes to a mild form of sardonic cynicism, verging upon absolute pessimism. Poverty, to the best a burden, to such becomes intolerable. It crushes the higher nature of the man. It energises as a demon to destroy, not as an angel to purify. We do not train for Putney on champagne and

port, still less on claret and whisky. The monks who were inspired to design and erect our cathedrals could not have been Friar Tucks, neither did the Yankee millionaires begin with a course of high living and sparse thinking.*

To return to Messrs. Lumper and Sponge. Having trotted Tobin's poor mare about twenty miles, until, in a word, all the kick was out of her gallop, they returned to the bosom of their college in order to indulge in a copious ablution. As for the latter, having rehabilitated to his supreme comfort, and endured his manly limbs with the *toga virilis* of the baccalaureate, he marched majestically into hall to receive an invite to Tompkins' big wine. Whereupon, possibly because the mandate was so very belated—he became seized with a bad fit of mock modesty. "Very much obliged; but he had a lot of letters to write, and in point of fact, must ask to be let off." Now, much as Mr. Tompkins would prefer his room to his company, he scarcely cared to accept this sort of refusal. Everyone would suppose that he had left Sponge out of

* Cecil Rhodes with his miraculous metamorphosis from Oriel to Kimberley as an adventurer, and back again from Kimberley to Oriel as a millionaire, rather upsets this argument. But we are not all of the dynamic potentiality of an empire-maker.

malice prepense, so he pressed him to look in, if only for five minutes, appending by way of bait, a hint that he intended to broach a peculiarly rare bin from the paternal cellars. Thus assured of his importance, and glancing round the table to glean that his presence would not be altogether unacceptable, he replied in the tone of a monarch granting a favour, "Thanks, Mr. Tompkins, I will try and render justice to your refined hospitality."

Justice is scarcely the right word. Mr. Sponge, having collared a bottle of the aforesaid rarity in vintages, which veritably did emanate from a *bona fide* cellar, and not from the equivocal back premises of an Oxford vintner, punished it ferociously. Not content, when everyone else had well drunk, he "troubled" his host for the claret. Shortly after, that tap being inferior, he "troubled" Jones for the sherry; indeed, he kept on "troubling" all round, until most of the guests had finished their coffee and cigars, after which he made a fresh start, and beginning where they had left off, troubled the coffee, and demanded fresh anchovy toast, which had to be made on purpose.

To render his due, nevertheless, to this highly absorbent gentleman, it is but fair to

say that he earned his provender. Talk, small, large, medium, exuded from his lips incessantly. Chaff was winnowed from a fertile brain. His visage lighted up with beaming good temper, and so wide and catholic was his sympathy that he positively succeeded in laughing little Slingsby, a child just fresh from the fifth form, into ordering shell fish unlimited, with a concomitant of punch, at 10.30, so as to make a night of it. Slingsby, be it understood, had not yet learnt the value of money, so complied with his senior's tryannical demands in a spirit of gleefulness, evoked perhaps by the rare vintage of Tompkins *père*.

Immediately after coffee, cards. Here for the first time in the day, Mr. Sponge had to put his hand in his pocket. He must make his stake. Nay, more, he inveighed loudly against his hands, describing luck as infamous, and the cards as impossible. Yet when the players rose for Slingsby's supper it was discovered that this most unfortunate of men had netted a nice round sum. Nobody knew how much he was to the good, except his trousers, and they would not say. But later on, in a burst of confidence, he owned up to Lumper that it may have been as much as three sovereigns.

Little Slingsby had done the thing in

style. Strange and spicy drinks in silver flagons adorned his festive board. Native oysters seemed to resemble the plethora of silver in King Solomon's days—the wine of "no account." Lobsters shed a rubicund lustre, and a monster crab invited the attentions of those endowed with a reckless disregard of ulterior consequences. Beer, bread, cheese and other buttery commodities were littered around in endless profusion. On the fire sung a huge kettle, and the scout had borrowed a punch bowl, the size of a basin, from the Senior Common-room. Presto, young appetities go to work. Ceremony seemed dispensed with, as also moderation. Mr. Sponge shows a brilliant example, performing a *tour de force* of deglutition. He is observed to dally long and deeply with the strange drinks. At last, hilarity usurping the realm of gormandisation, little Slingsby proposes that Mr. Sponge be requested to concoct the flowing bowl.

This motion, seconded by acclamation, incites our gentleman to proceed on the Irish principle, that every drop of water spoils the punch. Then, having done his duty by braying a fine old crusted ditty, he lit a quiet pipe, filled a tumbler of punch, and retiring to a snug corner, proceeded to enjoy himself,

while younger and more mercurial souls were howling, bear-fighting, and otherwise raising Pandemonium.

As he will not exceed this one tumbler, being much too clever to risk inebriety, we can now make up his little bill for the day, which shall be computed on anything but an exaggerated scale, and not on that of Oxford tradesmen, who giving long credit, recoup their frequent losses by making honesty pay for dishonesty. Hence our figures, stated at cost price, represent less than the entire loss occasioned by the fascinating society of Mr. Sponge, B.A., between morning and midnight:—

Salmon cutlets, tea, eggs, cream, etc.	0	2	6
One plover, part of omelette, and sundries	0	3	6
Pint of cyder cup, and two cigars	0	3	0
Soda and brandy	0	1	0
Wing and breast of chicken ..	0	1	6
Tongue, cream cheese, *paté de foie*	0	3	0
Pint of Moselle, lobster salad ..	0	6	0
Pint of Amontillado	0	5	0
Two cigars	0	1	0
Dinner in hall	0	2	6
Share of Tompkins' wine ..	0	4	0
Cigars, coffee, etc.	0	1	6
Shell-fish, etc.	0	3	0

Strange drinks	0	2	0
Punch, tobacco, etc.	0	2	0
Won at billiards	1	0	0
Share of table	0	1	6
Dog cart, half share	0	7	6
Won at cards	3	0	0
	£6	10	6

or, in plain English, the wages of sixty agricultural labourers for a days' hard toil, the salary of a dean, or of three canons, or of two professors, or of twenty odd curates, or of forty odd parish doctors.

Very comfortably earned too, as much so as in Capel Court—especially if there be no future in this world or the next, no remorse for wasted time, no seeds sown of disease, or such habits as corrupt and desecrate. From which we may infer that Sponge sometimes proves to be his worst enemy. Certainly he is the most insidious foe of youth and inexperience. The memory of such friends is not blessed. Sooner or later their game comes to be found out, and when the tide of popularity turns, their position can scarcely be deemed enviable. Space would fail to describe a tithe of the petty dodgeries of this class of parasite—their borrowing large and small sums with

but a vaporous chance of being able, or willing, to repay ; their strong attachment for anyone's books, tobacco, cigars, and other handy properties ; the habit they seem to have contracted of losing or leaving their purse, even supposing the receptacle not to be supplemented by a two-headed shilling for tossing purposes, and many other idiosyncrasies more characteristic than Christian. We have selected Mr. Sponge, B.A., as being the tallest sample, for he is agreeable, jovial, a scholar and a gentleman. From a higher estate he stoops to conquer, his victory being beneath contempt. Sponging after all amounts to modified felony, and felony is not a charge a man of honour cares to have hurled against him, even in *foro conscientiæ*.

THE ST. SWITHIN'S JUNIOR PROCTOR

CHAPTER I

ST. SWITHIN'S bears the reputation of being a small and cosy college; small if you estimate size by number, cosy as regards domestic arrangements. Not only is its architecture gorgeously florid to the delight of photographers, but also the venerable buildings contain within their area a kitchen presided over by a well salaried artiste; a brewhouse, from whence issues nectar; a vast cellar, stocked with vintage wines, which have never suffered sophistication at the hands of the wily wine merchant; a lofty hall, and a brace of common rooms. The institution, as a whole, is managed on the principle of a first rate residentiary club; and if the junior members happen to be burdened by a few lectures per week, and by compulsory attendance at divine service, together with conformity to certain domiciliary regulations hardly irksome, they

are compensated fully by possessing a home as nearly approaching the nature of an earthly paradise as is compatible with the total exclusion of the peris. Let not the *doctrinaire*, however, sneer down St. Swithin's as a fetid centre of useless luxury. The college from time immemorial, if it dined more after the fashion of gentlemen than swine, in pleasing contrast to certain other institutions where the *doctrinaire* element ruled, managed somehow to shine on the river, in the cricket field, and in the schools. St. Swithin's, prolific in genius, showed, moreover, a good average of talent; whilst its residuum of mediocrity has ever been cultivated and well mannered, its downright stupidity rare.

So far as regards the college. Now let us take a peep at the men of a date not more than half a century ago.

Breakfast: a broiled sole, scrambled eggs, and a dish of Oxford sausages. By the way, did you ever happen to eat those same *saucissons?** If so, you will never again pollute your lips with the tasteless apologies which hail from the banks of

* The genuine Oxford Sausage is compounded of equal proportions of veal and pork with chopped sage and coarse black pepper. Rolled into portions the size of your thumb it is innocent of skins.

sluggish Cam; *experto crede*. The first London *restaurateur* who has the pluck to establish Oxford sausages as an item of his *menu* will make his fortune. This by way of parenthesis. (Luncheon bars, please note.)

Discussing these homely delicacies sat two young gentlemen. Pompone, tall, handsome, heavy, with a black moustache of dimensions to destroy a Guardsman of envy. Temperly, fair, girlish, soft-eyed, without so much as a blade of down on his cheeks, yet withal rakish and mischievous looking. Both were biting very hard indeed; whilst John Thomas, the scout in attendance (his name, for abbreviation's sake, was commonly condensed into Jommas), sighed as his hopes of feeding a tribe of young Jommases on the remains of those same sausages vanished like the fabric of a vision. With the air of a disappointed

man, the poor soul abruptly turned, and leaving the room slammed the door savagely.

"Hie, Jommas!" cried Mr. Temperly, with his mouth full; "Jom-*mas!*"

But Jommas not replying, Mr. Pompone dashed incontinently to the door, and, with a voice like an ophicleide, ejaculated:

"Jo-hommas!"

This fetched the man back at a trot. He hated Mr. Temperly, but he feared Mr. Pompone.

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, Jommas," said Mr. Temperly confidentially, in a dulcet musical voice, "just go to the common-room, and get me a pint of moselle, and fill my cigar-case with Bobos,and——"

"Haw," interrupted Mr. Pompone majestically, "Jommas, fetch me a long clay p'hipe, and, haw, a qu'hart of sp'hiced beer; no, two qu'harts; and look sharp—do you hear?"

Whilst the faithful Jommas was absent to deport these luxurious necessaries from the junior common-room, the college messenger entered with the morning's letters. Each of our friends received a billet-doux bearing the same postmark, "Leamington"; and, oddly enough, each upon hastily perusing his epistle exclaimed,

after the manner of the ancients, "By Jove!"

"Hey?" asked Mr. Temperly.

"Hey?" echoed Mr. Pompone.

"Sweetest Lulu!" rhapsodised Mr. Temperly, affectionately embracing the little missive, and then from his heart transferring it to his nose, which, by the way, was rather *retroussé* than straight. "Sweetest Lulu! *Not of itself, but thee!* But I say, Pom, this is confounded awkward. They're coming on Friday."

"Haw, exactly. To-day's Wednesday," oracularly responded Mr. Pompone, patting his moustache.

"And we had arranged to go to town on Friday, you know," added Mr. Temperly, pouting like a spoiled child.

"We'd better go to-morrow instead," remarked Mr. Pompone, continuing to read his letter. Whereupon Mr. Temperly began to *think*.

Whilst he is occupied in this to him unusual mental process, we will seize the golden opportunity of acquainting the courteous reader with the fact, that Messrs. Pompone and Temperly happened to be engaged to two fair sisters; whereof the elder, Dody, had accepted Mr. Pompone because he was heir to a baronetcy and a

fortune; the younger, Lulu, had hooked herself on to Mr. Temperly, whose prospects were dubious, for the very schoolgirl reason because she had fallen head-over-ears in love with him. *Per contra*, whereas Mr. Pompone was infatuated about Dody, who in her heart cherished a secret affection for an impossible and uncleanly music master, Mr. Temperly cared for Miss Lulu about as much or as little as he cared for his spaniel Fan, whom he would beat one moment and caress fondly the next.

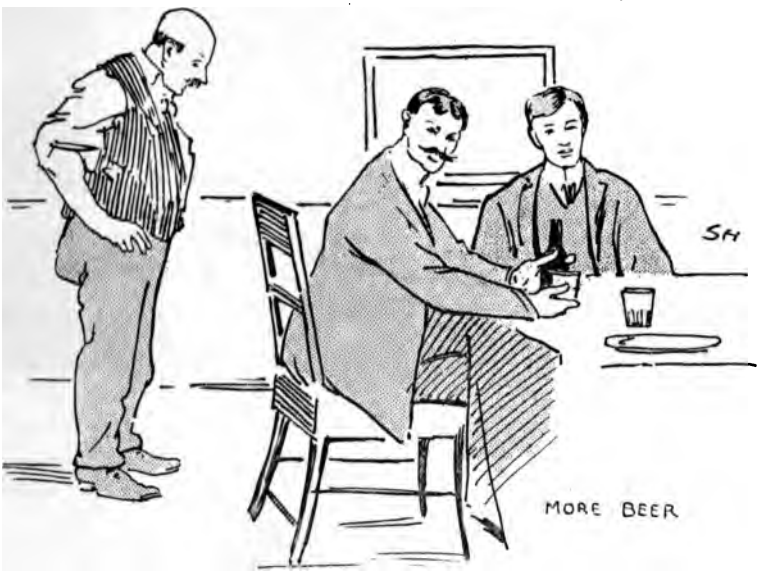
From the above premisses the reader can form his own conclusion as to the motives which induced Mr. Pompone to be as reticent concerning the epistle he had received from Dody as his friend Mr. Temperly was communicative about Lulu's little love letter, sweet and short in contrast to her sister's, which being laboured was long.

At this juncture Jommas re-entered, having in his right hand a large silver tankard of spiced beer, in his right pocket a bottle of moselle, in his left pocket a tumbler, and in his left hand a corkscrew and Mr. Temperly's cigar case. A man to utilise himself was Jommas.

Following in his immediate wake appeared a gentleman, bearing on his countenance a stereotyped and beaming grin, on

his cheeks a pair of symmetrical ginger whiskers, and attached to his left eye a glass, which might have grown there, it seemed so fixed.

Need it be added that this was Mr. Rapax, who, having by the agency of the eye-glass



perceived that moselle and spiced beer were journeying across the quadrangle in the direction of Mr. Pompone's hospitable quarters, followed the seductive fluids with a zeal which would brook no repulse. Mr. Rapax might be met anywhere and every-

where. Thin, supple, and wiry, his constitution was capable of grappling with quantities of solids and fluids such as would have killed an ordinary organisation; whilst as regards smoke, you could no more supply him with *enough* than a dozen Lascars can feed a hungry elephant, though they mow themselves into a fever.

Of course his advent precluded intimate confidences between our two friends. With the affability and ease of his type he at once made himself at home. As to the moselle he was so playful that Jommas had to be despatched for another pint; to the cigars he took kindly but firmly; whilst later on he even went so far as to condescend to assist Mr. Pompone in dealing with the immense volume of fluid contained within the circumference of a two-quart college tankard; an effort of politeness which perhaps did not raise him in the opinion of the expectant Jommas, who himself had a penchant for spiced beer about ten o'clock in the morning or thereabouts.

Mr. Pompone having drank, warmed, heavily of course, but perceptibly. He stated authoritatively his intention of visiting the metropolis on the morrow. This, however, did not meet the notions of

Mr. Temperly, who happened to have other plans organised.

"Bother the petticoats!" muttered that gentleman testily. "I shall write to Lulu, and tell them to put off their descent upon us till next week."

"I'm bl'hessed if you do," rejoined Pompone ferociously. "I'm not going to have their proposal flung back in their face."

"You're confounded spooney," sneered Mr. Temperly.

Now this remark would have ruffled a lesser being. Mr. Pompone, however, piqued himself on his moral nature being mosquito-proof. Hence he at once acquiesced with—

"Haw, perhaps so. One can't breathe same a'hatmosphere with Dody without, haw, feeling, haw, hum——"

"As if you wanted to kiss her," interposed Mr. Temperly, simpering sarcastically.

"Ki'hiss her? Exactly. Pass the beer, Rapax."

There was a very ugly cloud gathering on the features of Mr. Pompone; Mr. Temperly's quick instinct perceived it.

"All right, old boy," he cried, "you shall be humoured. I did want to have bowled

against Exeter to-morrow ; but never mind, we'll go to town instead. First train—put on an *æger*—cut chapel—and drop down by the 10.30 in the evening. Eh ? "

" Good," replied Mr. Pompone ; and thereupon, solemnly putting on his gown, he strolled off towards the lecture-room of the senior tutor.

CHAPTER II

On the morning following, just as the Dean began in a semi-sleepy tone to address the undergraduates as "Dearly-beloved brethren" from his stall in the college chapel, two young gentlemen emerged from the lodge-gate, where stood in readiness for them a smart hansom cab with a long-legged horse of the Irish breed.

"Look alive, Pom!" vociferated Mr. Temperly to his friend, who had turned back to search for the college porter in the recesses of the lodge.

"No letters for the next half hour," replied that functionary in answer to an anxious query of Mr. Pompone.

In a trice the big dark man had leapt into the cab, endangering the springs, if there were any, and the fast horse was bowling away stationwards at a rate of fifteen miles an hour.

They caught the express by a couple of minutes, tipped the cabby for his admirable Jehuship, and with smiling faces were whisked off to the metropolis as fast as steam could carry them; Mr. Pompone having in his head a bright idea of purveying back from Covent Garden such a basketful of exotics and forced fruits as should astonish the Leamington young ladies on the morrow.

Leaving our travellers, as the "Art of Pluck" hath it, to enjoy their lark, we will retrace our steps to St. Swithin's College, where the messenger is busy delivering letters, and the scouts are all of a clatter with tea, coffee, and grilled victuals.

Mr. Rapax, on this particular morning, did not happen to be asked anywhere to

breakfast. Both on economical grounds and because he was gregarious in his tendencies, he entertained a rooted objection to eating at his own expense in his own rooms. He had therefore instructed his scout to take over his commons to the rooms of one Mr. Bumpus, who, besides being of a devil-me-care disposition where expenditure was concerned, held the reputation of being one of the chief wags of the University. Mr. Bumpus rose several inches above the height of a man, had quite double the volume of voice commonly bestowed upon the most virile of the species, with muscles to match, yet somehow there was a schoolboyish look and manner about him rather comical than not.

The moment Mr. Rapax thrust his head in at the door Mr. Bumpus seized him by either whisker, which, in spite of the other's struggles, he pulled like bell ropes, till the wretched man yelled for mercy.

"You thief, Rapax!" he exclaimed; "I'm blest if you shall have a crumb of my breakfast!"

"Shan't I?" replied Mr. Rapax, smiling, in spite of his sore whiskers. "I'll fight you for it."

They were just about to begin a ferocious bear-fight, when the college Mercury enter-

ing handed Mr. Bumpus a letter, the superscription whereof was in a lady's hand.

"Who's that from?" asked Mr. Rapax, sitting down and beginning to devour vigorously.

"Only from one of my numerous wives. Stop, though; this is beyond a joke. Where are Pompone and Temperly? Fact is"—this seriously—"there are some friends of theirs—hens, you know—coming up from Leamington today, and——"

BUMPUS SEIZED RAPAX BY THE WHISKERS.

"Whew!" whistled Mr. Rapax. "That accounts for the milk in the cocoanut. Why, they've got a method in their madness. They're in town by now, and out of harm's way."

"How, what, which? Explain! I don't understand."

"Simply this," replied Mr. Rapax coolly, "I was in Pom's room yesterday morning, and they were discussing whether they

should go up to town to-day or not. Pom was pro, Temperly con. ; Pom had his way, and they're gone. That's all."

Mr. Bumpus bit his lip. "I call that cool," he said. "Look here. I happen to have the misfortune to be second cousin once removed, or something of that sort, to a brace of doosid pretty girls. Not to be profane, I was rather smitten, bitten, hitten, or whatever you like, with the elder, Dody ; but old Pom, with his corky moustache and precious swagger, made the running last Commemoration, and I am left out in the cold. Not that I grumble ; all's fair in love. But I do think that if a man takes away a girl from another man—you understand me—the very least he can do is to stick to her, for she is sure to be spoilt for everybody else. Now, I've heard it whispered that old Pom is not as attentive as he might be ; and, by Jove, as if that wasn't enough, he and Temperly invite their girls over here for the day, the girls accept the invitation, and then these two precious sweeps slope, sir—simply *slope*—and leave me to do the entire hospitable trick. I say it's mean. It's—it's—dashed if I know what it is!"

"Temperly," observed Mr. Rapax, "didn't want to go."

"Then," shouted the irate Mr. Bumpus, "he might have stopped and done the civil. Upon my honour I never heard of such an ungentlemanly and amazing proceeding before. Hey, Rapax?"

But Mr. Rapax, having eaten his own breakfast, was now too busily engaged in swallowing that of Mr. Bumpus to pay much attention to mere words. So Mr. Bumpus continued meditatively—

"I'll tell you what it is; I'll serve those fellows out. By Jove I will! Let me think—gone to town. When do they come back?"

"By the last train," answered Mr. Rapax, still grappling manfully with his excited neighbour's breakfast.

"The last train," echoed Mr. Bumpus—"the last train! Yes, I have it, sir—I have it! I've guessed the riddle." Wherewith he fell a-chuckling, as one perfectly self-satisfied and passing happy.

"Riddle?" gurgled Mr. Rapax, through his toast and tea.

"Yes, you idiot. Take that eye-glass out of your eye, and don't glare at me like an octopus. You've had too much to eat. Hello! why, where's my breakfast?"

* * * *

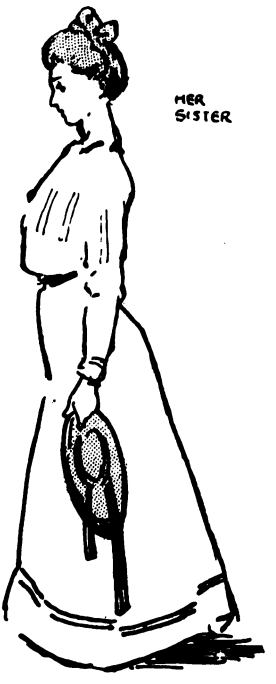
It is very much the fashion in University

circles to vote " hens " a bore, however well feathered those attractive bipeds may be. Mr. Bumpus, therefore, was quite *en règle* in dubbing himself an injured man, because the duties of hospitality unexpectedly devolved upon his shoulders. Nevertheless, when once he found himself dispensing pulled chickens, *paté de foie gras*, and cup to his really lovely relatives and their buxom mamma —Miss Dody for the nonce actually exerting herself to entrance her host—his spirits rose, and he felt like one who could go in cavalierly and cut out the inimitable Pompone.

DODY

" I am sure," urged Miss Lulu apologetically, " I cannot comprehend how Mr. Pompone and Mr. Temperly could have left us in the lurch. We certainly wrote to them last night, and I posted my letter and Dody's myself, with my own hands."

"I think," remarked Mr. Rapax, who had been pressed into the service of lioniser, "our friends had made their arrangements yesterday. At all events, Mr. Pompone must have had some very important business to take him to London, as he was determined to go, although Mr. Temperly tried hard to dissuade him."



Whereat Mr. Bumpus grinned audibly; Miss Dody flushed with anger; Miss Lulu's azure orbs began to display signs of moisture.

"I'm sure," said Miss Dody, with flashing eyes, "it will be a long time before I again accept an undergraduate's invitation." In her wrath she forgot that they had themselves proposed this ill-starred incursion.

"Some little mistake—easily explained—no intentional rudeness, my dee-ah," ejaculated Dody's mamma.

"Not a bit of it," cried Mr. Bumpus

cheerily. "I take it all in. Pleasure before duty, you know, is the old maxim of ingenuous youth. However, if you will only wait till the last train, I'll show you a bit of sport. In fact, we will roast these truants famously, and you shall enjoy the spectacle. Don't ask questions. The plot will develop itself naturally. Are you all agreed?"

"I am afraid," remarked Miss Dody's and Miss Lulu's mamma, "that half-past ten will be very late for us. Besides, I am too old for practical jokes."

"Mamma, how can you be so selfish?" cried Miss Dody.

"Mamma dear," whispered Lulu, "I should so like to see *him*, if only for a minute. Do wait."

The appeal of the younger daughter prevailed, and the result was that the whole party placed themselves unreservedly under the guardianship of Mr. Bumpus.

CHAPTER· III

To render ourselves passably lucid, we must explain that the University does not recognise the liberty of the undergraduate subject to travel to and from the metropolis without special leave from college authorities. Hence—as for instance on a Derby day, when young blood will be disobedient—if any number of undergrads are suspected of having thus misused the G.W.R., a proctor, or University magistrate, is in attendance at the station, to catch the peccant birds on their wing homeward, and, metaphorically, to put salt on their tails.

About ten o'clock, pacing the platform of the above-named railway station at Oxford, on the evening of this eventful day, the curious observer might have remarked an elderly lady, rather fagged, with two bright-eyed girls, who seemed to be waiting for the train which, arriving from London, would

proceed to Leamington. Strange to say, in close conversation with these people posed a proctor of the University, distinguished by his black velvet sleeves and long bands, and with him a person who to all appearance seemed to be a bulldog, *i.e.* one of the *posse comitatus* who follow the proctor's heels as a bodyguard. Both the proctor and his man were heavily bearded, and assumed an aspect truly ferocious. The party seemed merry enough, the dignitary exhibiting especially signs of extreme exhilaration; whilst the bulldog, instead of keeping at a respectful distance, joined in conversation with all three ladies quite affably, and on equal terms. As soon as the train was signalled, both the proctor and his man took leave of the ladies with much cordiality, and at once marched off to the other end of the platform.

There must have been more than one undergraduate in that train, for scarcely had it drawn up with the usual jerk when a loud cry was raised of " Proctor ! Proctor ! " and several pairs of heels were exhibited in flight. The dreaded functionary, however, instead of chasing stray birds, marched leisurely down the train, poking his nose inquisitively into the first class carriages. In one of the compartments he detected no

less a personage than Mr. Pompone, who was about to attempt to escape from the opposite door of his carriage.

"Your name and college, sir?" asked the proctor, raising his cap with studied politeness.

"P'hompone of St. Swithin's," was the response.

"Call upon me to-morrow at ten o'clock," said the proctor in a tone of extreme asperity, and at once passed on rapidly to investigate the other carriages. Mr. Temperly, however, had eluded his vigilance, and the proctor, apparently satisfied with his capture of Mr. Pompone, turned round to see that gentleman safely off the platform. The train was now in motion, and the stalwart figure of the tall dark undergraduate as he stood pensively on the platform, feeling perhaps beautifully less as he bitterly thought of the morrow with its

possible rustication, seemed posed like a grim statue, when from the window of a carriage a white handkerchief fluttered a sarcastic welcome, and he perceived to his sublime horror Dody, his precious Dody, with her mamma and Lulu, slowly and majestically move off into the darkness which lay between Oxford and Leamington.

And Mr. Temperly? His fate was perhaps less tragic, though not less painful. At the terrible cry of "Proctor!" he had first of all essayed to hide himself under the seat of his carriage; finding this manœuvre for obvious reasons impossible, he looked out of the window farthest from the platform, hailed a porter, who, accepting a sovereign in mistake for a shilling, unlocked the door. In his blind haste poor Mr. Temperly tripped and fell in a sedent attitude on the farther line of rails, to his unutterable pain. From this ugly position he recovered himself with difficulty, scrambled up the opposite platform, and limped off post-haste to St. Swithin's.

On arriving at the porter's lodge he encountered Mr. Pompone, very crestfallen indeed, not to say melancholy. Arm-in-arm they passed through the portal into the inner quadrangle, where, to their amazement, were gathered a crowd of expectant

undergrads, who greeted them with peals of derisive laughter.

Suddenly from their midst emerged a proctor and a bulldog, gesticulating pantomimically.

"Your name, sir, and college? Call on me to-morrow at ten." The voice was familiar. In a trice both men whisked off their beards, revealing the exuberantly jovial countenances of Messrs. Bumpus and Rapax.

"A nice lot you are," quoth the former, "to leave me alone to lionise your hens."

On their tables they found letters to state that, as Friday was an archery meeting, the young ladies would make their appearance on Thursday, hoping the surprise would be pleasant.

Let us bury in oblivion the chaff these hapless wights encountered. They bore it good-humouredly. Nevertheless, after the lapse of years, we learn from authentic sources that Miss Dody did not attain the dignity of becoming Lady Pompone, but somehow sank down to be plain Mrs. Bumpus; also that Mr. Temperly went out to Queensland to avoid creditors, but omitted to expatriate Miss Lulu, who remains still in spinsterhood, waiting for the coming man.

OXFORD RAFFLES

(1) Mr. Scarsdale's "Dawg"

IMMEDIATELY after the publication of that most charming burlesque of Oxford life, "Mr. Verdant Green," which certainly succeeded in depicting a learned University as an amalgam of beer, skittles and bull-dogs, the wide-world notoriety obtained by Huz, his first born, and Buz, his brother—or as the dean of St. Swithin's, a dab at Hebrew, used to render these primitive names "Hoots" and "Boots"—fired the lofty undergraduate soul with a noble ambition to possess a Huz, if not a Buz, a Hoots if not a Boots. Filthy Lucre in those ancient days did a roaring trade, although how he escaped hydrophobia remains a mystery. His residence in the region of Jericho, well stocked by-the-way with babies, was always overcrowded with the canine species.

A rabid dog would bite him in five places

so that he appeared streaming bell-ropes of blood.

"It's his playfulness, sir," the honest

man would profess, in no way disconcerted.

Another of the species, who in some

previous state of existence must surely have been a limpet, would nail himself to Filthy's calf, and refuse to let go, even when the gentle process of biting his tail was adopted as a persuasive.

"A dawg of the right sort!" would be the encomium passed by the wounded man. Pain could not ruffle so placid a temper.

Of all envied undergrads of that period let Mr. Scarsdale of Brasenface bear the palm. He *had* got a bull-dog. You never clapped eyes on such a bull-dog. Its chest was simply a type of latitude. Its under jaw protruded like a Zulu's. It cared neither for God nor man, save its master. From him it would put up with rough usage, verging on brutality, without so much as a grunt or a growl. But just let any one else approach and the consequences could not easily be predicted. A favourite practical joke of Mr. Scarsdale was to stroll down to the barges, where rowing men dispose of garments temporarily laid aside, or else to the cricket tents—pavilions had not then been invented—and after piling in a heap the raiment of a dozen men, bid Muzzler keep watch. The bravest of the brave dared not tackle Muzzler, and after vain efforts to outwit him, they were compelled to fling a cricket net over his head, and

even then could only recover their garments at the imminent risk of being pinned.

Mr. Scarsdale, the master of this terrific dog, happened to be gifted with a rare talent for tumbling into very serious hot water. He achieved such a series of plucks that the college very nearly turned him out neck and crop. He quarrelled with his father at the very moment when duns were nearly driving him ramping, raging, roaring mad. Worst of all, he incurred a debt of honour, which he was unable to meet, and this placed him on rather " kicky " terms with his set.

" What *am* I to do ? " This to his *fidus Achates*, Bob Cherry. Bob looked stupid. and lit a silent cigar. Some minds cannot think until involved in cloud.

" An awful fix," Mr. Scarsdale continued. " Awful ! Coin owing all round, including the bursar. Credit exhausted, and the governor alike undutiful and impossible. Can't you see the way out, Bob ? "

" I have it ! " responded Mr. Cherry, after a few portentous puffs. " Raffle old Muzzler. His reputation stretches from Greenland's icy to India's coral. Value him at fifty guineas, and I'll bet you a bottle every copper will be subscribed."

" Perhaps ! " answered his friend. " But then, I couldn't, no, I couldn't part with my

old friend. Hie! Muzzler, come here, old boy. That wouldn't suit you, eh?"

Muzzler emerged from under the sofa, soft as a lamb, and licked his master's hand.

"I—I couldn't do it, Cherry!"—a lump in his throat.

Mr. Bob Cherry, however, smoked on in impassive taciturnity. It was no use argufying.

"Well!" snapped Mr. Scarsdale, irritated by his friend's silence.

"Well!" smiled Mr. Cherry.

"Can't you utter?"

"Rather. I have given you my advice, as a looker-on, who sees the best of the game. Raffle the dog, Scarsdale, and the winner, you bet, will be glad enough to cry off his bargain."

Mr. Scarsdale began to think.

"The good old dog," he muttered, talking to himself, "would come home. But that would not quite do."

"Put it at the worst, Scarsdale. Suppose Clasher, of Christ Church, or Nobbs of 'The Tavern,' or any *bonâ fide* sporting man, wins, would he not gladly accept a 'tenner' to be shot of a dog of old Muzzler's sort? Besides, the odds are a muff would win, and muff or no muff, I don't envy the man that tries Muzzler's teeth."

Mr. Scarsdale was cornered, but not convinced. However, "needs must when the devil drives," and he found himself confronted with downright disgrace. The man in his way was proud, being the scion of an aristocratic house, so just as the mother threw her children to the wolves, so this good fellow was compelled by iron destiny to sacrifice the truest friend he owned in the wide world.

Bob Cherry got up the raffle, and such was the run on the tickets that double the amount could easily have been raised, whereby so far as relief from an *impasse* went, Mr. Scarsdale felt happy. But he could not look at the dear old dog without an overwhelming sense of guilt, and so crushed was the man's spirit, that pocketing his pride, he indited a grovelling epistle to his father, diplomatically begging, not for money, but forgiveness.

He should have thought of that alternative earlier, for the raffle came off, and Muzzler—like a poor slave—became the property of Mr. Fineekin of Wadham.

What imp of mischief persuaded that party to invest a guinea in a raffle for a dog of Muzzler's antecedents? Mr. Fineekin was a spare, nervous creature, who took his walks abroad alone. Surely he was not the

man to own a fighting dog, by whose side a bear would be lamb-like ?

The plain fact is, that Mr. Fineekin, during a solitary ramble in the country, had encountered a hulking tramp who had terrorised him out of a florin ; item a bull, who caused him to tumble over a hedge regardless of brambles and thorns. After that he reflected that a really savage dog would protect him effectually alike from tramps and bulls. Cowardice then, was the motive power inducing this bundle of nerves to covet Muzzler ; but he reckoned without the dog.

The raffle came off in Bob Cherry's rooms, and at its conclusion, Mr. Fineekin, as an out-college man and a stranger, found himself under a paramount obligation to deport the canine prize that had fallen to his lot.

He therefore gingerly advanced towards Muzzler, with " Poo' fellow, then," and other blandishments—indeed, he was about to pat the old dog's head, had not an ominous growl compelled him to desist. In a second, Muzzler, anticipating mischief, rose to his feet showing a jaw of teeth.

Mr. Fineekin ricocheted at once.

" You needn't be alarmed, sir," remarked Bob Cherry sarcastically.

" D—do you th—think he'll b—bite ? "

stammered Mr. Fineekin, in mortal terror, his pallid countenance assuming the chloride hue which is the precursor of sea sickness.

"They will bite sometimes," answered Bob philosophically, taking refuge in a thin generality.

"D—do they b—bite v—vewy hard?"

"They won't let go, that's all," Mr. Cherry began to experience a malicious pleasure in the torture of Mr. Fineekin.

"It's wather awkward," gasped that gentleman, sidling gingerly towards the door. "I—I think I'll hire a cad to bwing the animal to my wooms."

With which assurance Mr. Fineekin jerked open the oak and was heard to rush down stairs like Niagara or a comet in a hurry.

Shortly after a man appeared at Mr. Cherry's door. He had come, so he affirmed, to fetch a leetle dawg—a poopee—for Mr. Fineekin of Wadham.

"There the dog is," remarked Mr. Cherry, with dry emphasis.

"Be you his master, sir?"

"No, my man; I am not. He did belong to Mr. Scarsdale, and Mr. Scarsdale is nowhere handy."

"P'raps I'd better call again? I don't like 'is looks."

"P'raps you hadn't. You must take the

dog now or never. I'm not going to keep other people's dogs in my rooms. Why could not Mr. Fineekin take him away ? "

Thus adjured, and feeling his pluck questioned, the fellow crept towards Muzzler carefully, and producing a chain from his pocket, prepared to attach it to the old dog's collar. This manœuvre was not lost on Muzzler, who eyed him for a second with an eye of steady suspicion, merging in hostility. Then without much ado in the way of vocalisation, he sprang at the man's calf and began to play with its muscles in a style promising anything but good for his future pedestrianism.

You never heard a cad howl like that cad. His shrieks brought up a brace of scouts and a baker's dozen of undergrads, including, luckily, Mr. Scarsdale. At a word from his old master, Muzzler released the man in a condition of lameness piteous to witness.

" I suppose I must take him to Wadham myself," observed Mr. Scarsdale, and suiting the action to the word, he whistled to Muzzler, who was licking his lips as if he appreciated human blood, and sauntered off with rather a heavy heart.

" Mr. Fineekin, sir ? " responded the Wadham porter. " No. 16, Back Quad, three pair left."

Thither wended their way both man and dog. They found Mr. Fineekin alone, save for a pile of books and notes. He was cramming auturgically.

"I congratulate you, sir," remarked Mr. Scarsdale in his most gentlemanly tone, "on possessing the best dog in the University. As you may suppose, I am sincerely sorry to part with an old friend."

"D—does he habitually bleed at the mouth?" inquired the other ruefully.

"Never, sir, except when badly out of temper," was the ready reply. Then, with a brief, "excuse me, sir, I'm in a hurry!" he dropped his glove in the doorway, and by a quick gesture motioning Muzzler to keep guard, bolted downstairs, leaving Mr. Fineekin as fairly a prisoner as the veriest malefactor in gaol.

"C—come here, then—goo' dog, then!" hiccupped Mr. Fineekin in mortal terror.

But no. The trusty soul, not being sufficiently sophisticated to comprehend the principles of buying and selling, budged not, nor paid the slightest attention to the endearments heaved at its head. Moreover, when Mr. Fineekin plucked up courage to advance a step towards him Muzzler smiled so ferociously as to downright paralyse his new master.

In terror and despair, Mr. Fineekin called out of the window to his scout; but the man was too 'cute to hear. Then sitting down to his Æschylus, he strove to derive comfort from the obscurer passages, but the consciousness of being watched by a dangerous dog did but render obscurity doubly obscure. After two hours of tension—for he could not feel quite sure that the dog would not fly at his windpipe, he bethought him of some biscuits in his cupboard. Perhaps this monster might be bribed into friendliness.

Nothing of the kind. Muzzler smelt the *douceur* contemptuously, scratched the fluffy doormat into a heap, and buried the biscuit.

Mr. Fineekin groaned in spirit when he found this ruse to be fruitless. He felt like the captive knight of the old story. Then the hall bell rang for dinner, and the poor man devoutly wished Muzzler at Jericho, for he was exceedingly hungry. But, alas! there was no escape. From the altitude of three pairs he saw the men troop to their feed and troop back again. Again he bellowed dismally for his scout; but Muzzler not sanctioning any such unseemly noise, growled ominously, so he was forced to desist.

It might have been about half-past eight,

when to his great joy, he heard a footstep lumber up the staircase. In a second the terrible dog began to skip as harmlessly as a young kid, crooning for joy over the mysterious visitor on the stairs. It was Mr. Scarsdale.

In the course of the afternoon, an affectionate father, moved by his son's repentant letter, had arrived in Oxford, bringing a satisfactory sample of the needful. Differences were promptly reconciled on the give and take principle. Sire and son dined sumptuously at the "Mitre," and now, with his mind at peace, his skin full of champagne, and his pockets with crisp bank notes, the gay youth came prepared to make arrangements for the redemption of his much loved friend.

It was dusky, for Mr. Fineekin had become so dominated by Muzzler as to dread a motion, or even a sneeze, lest it should lash his foe to fury. He would gladly have lighted a candle, but the matches were located at the other end of the room—a distance apparently unattainable without a probable catastrophe. Dark as it was, however, Mr. Fineekin could but guess the identity of his visitor.

"Is that Mr. Scarsdale?"

"Sir to you!" was the polite reply. "I came to——"

"For m—mercy's sake," yelled Mr. Fineekin, "k—keep that w—wetched bwute off my l—legs! If there's a thing I dwead, it's hydwophobia."

Muzzler was in one of his gayest humours, being overjoyed at Mr. Scarsdale's return after so long an absence; still, though he was shaking Mr. Fineekin's trousers, as if they were a rat, he did not mean biting.

"What's the row?" coolly observed Mr. Scarsdale. "I can't see."

Mr. Fineekin's yells, however, grew louder and louder, shriller and shriller, until it seemed on the cards that he might burst a blood vessel or drop down in a fit. Under these circumstances his very gentlemanly tormentor condescended to call Muzzler off.

"Wh—what will you take," stammered Mr. Fineekin, fairly overcome by funk, "to wemove the savage beast? I'll p—pay anything in w—weason if you'll only relieve me from being molested and tewwified."

"I don't understand what you're driving at," responded Mr. Scarsdale. "Why don't you light a candle?"

After a search for the match-box a flickering flame revealed the countenance of this sample of Wadham, blanched with horror, his limbs trembling as if palsied. It was beyond a joke.

"Now, sir," said Mr. Scarsdale, "you have won a dog worth a lot more than fifty pounds, and if I interpret your meaning right, you find his character a trifle too sporting to precisely suit your requirements. Eh?"

"Take him away! Take him to Jewicho." screamed the nervous youth. "That is all I ask."

"Quite so, my good sir. But that won't fit with my arrangements. You see, I can't afford to have it said that I raffled my dog and then accepted him as a present from the winner. It would look too much like collusion. I'll tell you, however, what I will do. You shall name a price, and I'll buy him back." And Mr. Scarsdale chinked some gold in his pocket persuasively.

Mr. Fineekin's eyes brightened.

"I've been wather upset," he replied, "and I paid a guinea for my raffle ticket. I'll take two guineas."

"Done!"

Mr. Fineekin, though pressed by Mr. Scarsdale to accept a lap-dog by way of solatium, refused to dally further with the species. He landed in due time his first and a fellowship; but when he served the office of proctor a nervous affection of the

left eye caused him to wink knowingly at every undergrad he attacked. However, as he was abnormally merciful, the men cheered him in the theatre, but warned him to keep his eyes off the ladies. As for Mr. Scarsdale, he went in for muscular Christianity, and they made him a Colonial bishop. They say that he has taught the "niggers" the noble art of self-defence, and could puzzle the heaviest weight in his diocese, even though handicapped by rochet and apron.

OXFORD RAFFLES

(2) Caractacus

A HISTORY of luck would be instructing. It has got to be believed, that those who obtain Fortune's smile in trials of chance, secure her frowns in the general run of things. Whether this rule holds good remains *sub judice*. The story of the man who turned up four aces and four kings at "Van," and lost an eye at racquets and a finger by a gun explosion, happens to be true; but then one swallow does not make a summer, and after all, some parsons lose equally at cards, and by the tombola of loaves and fishes. Euphues, who began by putting his bottom sovereign on a three-legged horse, ends a miserable career as chaplain to a workhouse, with the wages of a rural labourer, minus that good fellow's independence. *Che sara, sara!*

In the year when Caractacus won the Derby, a certain quiet don of St. Frides-

wide's put his pound into the Art Union lottery, and drew a bronze model, not of the quadruped, but of the historical biped bearing that name. This statuette, being of large proportions, seemed out of all proportion in his college rooms ; so he took it to Chisel, art dealer of the High Street, who, after declining to purchase any such gem of modern genius, offered none the less to raffle it at a guinea a ticket—one hundred tickets representing its hypothetical or ostensible value. Our black dragoon, who had offered it to Chisel at any figure he would give, even as low as ten pounds, jumped at the chance. Hence a notice appeared in the said dealer's window, that " a raffle would take place of a statuette in bronze by the late Signor Scagliola, of Caractacus, the property of a member of the University "

So far, so good. A languid interest was aroused, chiefly among that select circle which never feels comfortable unless it has a " bit on something," just as the coster's donkey travels fastest with a bunch of carrots before its nose. Among others whose eye was attracted by Chisel's notice may be mentioned Mr. Doncaster St. Leger, of St. Boniface. Now this gay youth, albeit his powers of calculation were unlimited in

respect of turf problems, never could bring his special talent to bear on others propounded perversely by examiners in the schools. Nature had provided him with every adventitious advantage bar one. He was gifted with money, good looks, equine appetite, the absorbent capacity of a camel, a jovial temperament, but unhappily, no brains. The name Caractacus, as he flattened his nose against Chisel's shop window, simply fascinated him. Never as yet in a scanty course of reading had he encountered the name and fame of the grand old British lion who baffled the invincible tenth legion. History was not in his line. He took up mathematics, and would assure you that if Euclid's mind had not been moulded on the pattern of a spider's web, he might have done the trick two terms ago. All the same, he had landed a nice round sum on the Derby, and dear, very dear to his soul was the name of an animal who had assisted an endeavour to settle his I.O.U.s, given at odd times to the head waiter of "The Crozier," and to partially satisfy the *auri sacra fames* of Shark, the liverystableman, and Whale, the tailor.

It all happened thus. Mr. Doncaster St. Leger, having saturated his inner man with

cigar smoke and chalk in Jonathan's billiard-rooms, opined that a mouthful of fresh air would render him more fit for the exigencies of dinner in hall. He therefore with stately solemnity, the leisurely attitude of one superior to care, perambulated the classic "High." Had he been in a hurry, things might have gone differently. As it was, the shop windows commanded his attention, and after rivetting an earnest gaze on

Standen's selection of blazers, digesting Foster's exhibition of academical costumes, from the pink and scarlet—ye Gods, what a conjunction!—of the dress D.C.L. to the cherry sleeves of the Mus.Doc., at last reached Mr. Chisel's splendid emporium, where beside a picture of the Flood was exhibited a figure from the nude. Thus the

raffle of Caractacus came upon his intelligence as a revelation. Was he in time? Yes, surely, for thus ran the announcement:—

CARACTACUS.

THIS EXQUISITE STATUETTE WILL BE RAFFLED FOR TO-MORROW.

TICKETS—ONE GUINEA.

N.B.—Early application requested, as only a few remain unallotted.

You might have heard Mr. Doncaster St. Leger gasp as he read these portentous words. In his several pockets he groped eagerly. Dash it all! where could that confounded purse have got to? A man of highly sanguine temperament, he never thought twice. To see him fling down his coin on a remote chance you would imagine him to be a billionaire. Best of all, with the perfect *sang froid* of a turfite, he never grinned when he won, still less, frowned over his losings. On the contrary, in all money transactions his countenance preserved the meaningless stolidity of plaster of Paris. At the present moment he felt morally convinced that by a bold investment in tickets

for this raffle he could secure, as an heirloom for his remotest descendants, the living image of a horse, whom he could but regard as a credit to his owner, his country—aye, to creation itself. Only, awkwardly, you cannot buy raffle tickets without money. Even in Oxford, where all sorts of commodities can be obtained on the empty security of a man's name and college, consideratons of this class have to be paid for in cash. To add to his discomfiture, not only were the hall bells of twenty colleges jangling for dinner, and therefore the quotient of the fish might in half a trice be figured by the tail and fins; but further, who should appear looming in the foreground but the Most Noble the Marquess Asnapper, of Cardinal College, a plutocrat of boundless wealth, and himself a conscientious patron of the turf. If only this supreme personage should spot Mr. Chisel's placard, why, he might positively buy up every remaining ticket. At such a crisis your Asnapper seems worse than a heathen Chinee.

Not that he need have fashed. A bare ten per cent. of the tickets were disposed of, and Mr. Ignatius Alban, who (under the impression that Caractacus might have been one of the multitudinous saints in the Roman calendar) intended to purchase, had

just emerged with his money saved, after learning that *the* Caractacus of the raffle happened to have escaped the honour of precanonisation. In his estimation a hero amounted to the smallest potatoes for lack of a nimbus. Caractacus figured not in his Valhalla; Cleodicus—whoever that saint may have been—did.

A moment's reflection convinced Mr. Doncaster St. Leger that to hesitate was to be lost. Advancing with the confidence of despair, he grappled the young tuft's arm in a way to suggest liberty if not licence, with: "I say, Asnapper, like a good fellow, lend me a tenner until after hall."

"No, I won't!" was the not unmerited rebuff, the Most Noble not so much as condescending to remove his toothpick from his mouth.

A less vivacious and more modest man would have looked all the fool he felt. Not so, Mr. St. Leger, who with an indignant "Blow you, then!" bounded off in the direction of St. Boniface.

A few seconds afterwards, and the front quad resounded with loud and incessant demands for "Messenger."

Mercury thus requisitioned, could but enter an appearance. You might imagine that the personage selected by the superior

wisdom of college authority to run errands would in some one particular resemble the ideal messenger of Jove. He would be fleet-footed, glib-tongued, elastic of gait, young, brisk. He need not have wings tacked on to his heels, but would be endued with the faculty of getting over the ground rapidly. In Oxford, however, they manage matters differently. Big Box, the St. Boniface messenger, might have been in the running with Olympus forty years ago. Truth compels to admit that as the old boy shambled towards Mr. Doncaster St. Leger, he looked much the reverse. His bullet head drooped below a pair of obese shoulders. His pace was elephantine, and as regards knees, rickety. His countenance exhibited not merely no scintilla of intellect, but almost no trace of consciousness. The man never yet could be called drunk, nor ever sober. He would occupy half an hour in discharging an errand a hundred yards distant. But, in spite of a superhuman stolidity and an invariable tardiness, he possessed one sound mental gift—memory. The fellow would listen to twenty different orders, gorge each of them in his extraordinary brain, and execute the lot to the letter. The head of St. Boniface opined that so highly gifted a servant must be

retained at all hazards. Had a man of his talent descended on the sister University, he must have been Senior Wrangler.

"Look here, Box!" gasped Mr. St. Leger, panting for his dinner. "Look here, stupid. Take this ten pound note to Chisel's—you hear me—Chisel's. Buy me as many raffle tickets for Caractacus as you can. If they won't part with ten, then nine, eight, seven. Stick to Chisel, Box, and don't you be taken in by his gammon. He'll pretend he's only two or three left. Hey? What?"

"You said tickets."

"Of course I did. Raffle tickets."

"For what, Mr. St. Leger?"

"Why, for Caractacus, of course. Didn't I say so?"

"All right, sir. I understand. Tickets for Cactus."

"Car–ac–ta–cus," gasped the hungry youngster, and at once rushed off to satisfy the urgent claims of appetite in the college hall.

It may perhaps be wholly unnecessary to explain that Mr. Box, the messenger, did succeed in purchasing ten tickets for the raffle, Mr. Chisel, under the circumstances, kindly putting down the odd ten shillings to Mr. St. Leger's little account, which was

duly rendered on the day following with interest added at the rate of five per cent. per quarter. It's a way we have in the 'Varsity. But it does not drive dull care away. Rather not.

On the day following a select company assembled at Mr. Chisel's shop. The Most Noble the Marquis, having purchased a solitary ticket, graced the occasion with his august presence. A sprinkling of undergrads looked anxious. To them enter the sprightly form of Mr. Doncaster St. Leger.

"Now, Mr. Chisel," he exclaimed, "let's have a look at the winner."

"That," replied the tradesman, rubbing his hands, "remains to be decided."

"None of your nonsense! By the winner I mean, of course, Caractacus."

"He! he! very good!" sniggered Mr. Chisel. Then turning humbly to the Marquis, he added: "Mr. St. Leger, my Lord Marquis, he allers will compare big things with little. It's his fancy, it is"—this by way of apology for Mr. St. Leger's flippancy.

"Ye—es!" replied the Most Noble, not comprehending the situation.

"Can't we make a start?" remarked a fussy man, brandishing his ticket fiercely at Mr. Chisel.

"Well, my Lord Marquis and gents, we'd best begin; but it is my dooty to inform you that the howner have bought in several tickets, owing to a deficiency in the subscription list."

No one commenting adversely on this arrangement, Mr. Chisel motioned the ticket holders to follow him into an inner chamber, where upon the table posed the bronze statuette in all its glory.

"Bother it all!" growled Mr. Doncaster St. Leger, snapping his fingers. He was waxing impatient. "What the doose is this caper? Why don't Chisel show us the horse?"

"Horse! What horse?" asked the Marquis.

"Why, Caractacus, of course!"

"*This* is Caractacus!" was the prompt response.

"This!" almost shrieked Mr. St. Leger. "Why, this is a naked savage. I've been had!"

"C'ractycus, gents," interposed Mr. Chisel, explanatorily, "was a h'ancient Britting."

"Caractacus be——!"

The remainder of this sentence was happily lost in the thunder of Mr. Doncaster St. Leger's exit. He went down the next

morning to escape a volcano of ridicule, and rumour hath it, migrated to Cambridge.

As for the statuette, it was won by the Marquis. Gold goes to gold.

OXFORD RAFFLES

(3) Mr. Seaton Tuke's Mare

THERE are some fellows in this world of ups and downs whose coin resembles a boomerang. Fling it how and where they will, carelessly or carefully, it invariably comes back to their feet. Not perhaps always overloaded with interest, sometimes rather sweated down by its passage through space; but then it never sticks fast *en route*. In raffles the tendency of bullion generally is not to gravitate towards the vendor. There may, nevertheless, be found exceptions to every rule, whereof the following appears to be somewhat notable.

Mr. Seaton Tuke in the earlier stage of an historic academical career adorned "the House." (Not, *bien entendu*, that of Lords or Commons, still less of Capel Court; simply that House, or *Œdes*, which was originally dedicated to St. Cardinal Wolsey,

but re-dedicated by Mr. Henry Tudor, the polygamous, with characteristic piety to the Founder of Christianity; his being the earliest sample on record of the Welsh Nonconformist conscience). Later on this gentleman played in Christ Church the part of Vesuvius to the surrounding scenery—in a word, he made the place too hot to hold him. Hence the dons bowed him out of Canterbury Gate with a testimonial styled *bene decessit*, which must not be rendered "He left his college with credit," but rather "He left his college for his college's good."

SEATON TUKE

Turned adrift, Mr. Tuke appealed to that most distinguished don, Dr. Wellesley, principal of New Inn Hall—alias "The place of the seven deadly sins," alias in vulgar parlance "The Tavern"—to afford him shelter. Nor in vain. The principal of "the seven deadly sins" simply stipulated

that he should deposit a round sum by way of caution-money, and also purchase for cash the furniture of the outgoing deadly sinner, whose rooms he would occupy. This symphony in chairs and tables resembled that of Hans Breitmann after the famous supper party, eight chairs owning only four legs between them, and the sofa, in the absence of any sort of prop *a tergo*, relying implicitly on the wall for support.

That same evening the more lively members of his set in "The House" assembled to quaff their friend's fluids in the largest spirit of sympathy and condolence. Deep were the imprecations hurled at tyrant dons, whose intelligence had proved so oblivious of the moral and social qualities whereby Mr. Seaton Tuke had eclipsed the average. A lofty scorn was expressed for the petty, paltry and pusillanimous temper which could utilise chronic violations of discipline as a colourable pretext for the dismissal *a gremio societatis* of a hearty good fellow. In response to such admirable sentiments, washed down with liquids calculated alike to cheer and inebriate, Mr. Seaton Tuke, his heart in his sleeve, could but assure these kind friends that *cœlum non animum mutavit*, and that after all the change from a ground floor

in Peckwater to first floor at "The Tavern" had its consolations. He reminded them that, in consideration of continuing members of "The House," they were subject to the hardships of early chapel, the routine of stupid lectures, and above all to a course of very inferior dinners, destitute of gravy, as well as of buttery beer, which resembled mud in winter and vinegar in summer. Whereas, in the peaceful repose of "The Tavern" early devotion was optional. No sleepifying lecturer interfered with hunting appointments; the commissariat was on a scale suited to a gentleman, champagne being served in the buttery; while, further, the dining-hall served as a common-room, subject to the not unreasonable restriction that cards, after an all-night session, ceased sufficiently early to enable the scouts to prepare the room for morning prayers—in case anyone might wish to attend that function, the pious founder having neglected to provide a chapel for his institution. Briefly, Mr. Seaton Tuke boasted himself a walking paradox—in disgrace, yet in clover.

About this time our hero lost his father, a block not much dissimilar to the chip who had migrated to "The Tavern." Moreover, when the said block's affairs

were wound up it looked muchly as though he had been a blockhead, inasmuch as he had so successfully muddled a nice property that, in lieu of a modest competency, all available for his heir amounted to a few hundreds and his celebrated bay mare, "Loadstone," the glory of the Pytchley country.

Ill news flies apace, and on Mr. Seaton Tuke's return from the funeral he discovered a levee of ill-favoured persons on his staircase. Then, a shoal of envelopes covered his table, each, like a snail's shell, containing something nasty. Disgusted at the brutality of a combined attack at such a moment, he addressed them one and all in language borrowed for the occasion from the hunting field, and actually went so far as to bury the toe of his boot in the adipose tissue of a very obese Israelite.

On the morrow an official called, and after many apologies served him with a sheaf of summonses. His first impulse was to swear, his second to bolt, his third to pay.

He obeyed the latter, and, under the circumstances, the more heroic of the three.

His enemies, once grovelling in his august presence, grinned—yes, grinned in his face. They knew him to be cleaned out, and with

every demonstration of sarcastic respect, declined all further orders.

What next? Even if he read with the zest of a Balliol mammoth he could not graduate for two terms, yet his sole asset was a valuable mare.

At this ugly crisis he could but consult his quite too euphumistic friend, Orlebar, of "the House."

To his amazement that good fellow did not, as he fondly anticipated, entreat him to accept the loan of a "thou" by way of temporary accommodation. Odd that—very, inasmuch as, were their positions reversed, he felt certain he could not have offered Orlebar less.

"I must part with the mare, I suppose?" he stammered forth in the melodramatic tone of Timon of Athens, as though so awful a sacrifice represented the last feather to break the camel's back.

"She'd fetch three hundred at Tattersall's," remarked Orlebar philosophically.

This indifference tried beyond endurance Mr. Seaton Tuke's sturdy manliness. A sob—or something like it—convulsed his frame. He really was as proud of being the owner of that famous hunter as is a peer of his coronet or a bishop of his lawn.

"I'm beastly sorry," observed his friend, simulating compassion.

"What the blank's the good of that?" growled the victim of misfortune with savage emphasis. He had descended, under the pressure of adverse circumstances, from his normal condition of optimism.

"Right you are, Tuke. '*Tears, idle tears, they are so doosid mean,*' My sister sings that song."

Evidently Mr. Orlebar had not been a student of Tennyson.

"Ta-ta, Orlebar," ejaculated Mr. Seaton Tuke, copying imperfectly his friend's *sang froid* as he moved towards the door.

"Don't go."

"Well?" moaned the other, resuming his seat.

Mr. Orlebar lighted a cigar. He was one of those men who never can think except through the medium of smoke.

"You must be pulled—(puff)—through—(puff)—somehow."

"But how?" petulantly.

"It's just this. Suppose you were to pitch into deep Martin, and couldn't swim, it would be open to me, when a dozen other fellows were on the bank, to jump in and fish you out, whereby I should get an infernal ducking; or the whole blessed

"Orlebar, old friend," hiccupped Mr. Seaton Tuke gleefully after the rest had departed, "I—I—am more than grateful. But you must let me return ten of those shares."

Orlebar, however, would hear of nothing of the sort. "My boy," he responded, "I stood to win on one share only, and had I won, I tell you flat and pat, I should have stuck to Loadstone."

With four hundred to the good and no discipline to disturb the even tenour of his way, Mr. Seaton Tuke thought that reading for the schools would be premature; in effect his philosophy might be summed up in the phrase, "Never put off till to-day what you can do to-morrow." Ergo, he stuck pertinaciously to amusement, thereby rendering the desiderated degree more remote than ever. Idleness, like every other weed, grows apace, and if tolerated soon becomes master. Hence, after the all-precious four had dwindled down to one, and when the one had dichotomised itself into fifty, and the fifty into twenty-five, the gay youth somehow felt toil more distasteful than ever, and began to contemplate enlistment or the colonies.

At this crisis Mr. Seaton Tuke for the second time staved off the evil day. Load-

stone during the winter months had been covering herself with glory in the Heythrop country. Her owner was no mean jock, and a lightweight withal. Under his judicious steering she had swum over those terrestrial ripples, the stone walls and low hedges, like a R.Y.S. craft in the Solent. In short, she augmented an already established reputation so splendidly that Lord Montaigne of " The House " asked, per his nearest friend, what Mr. Seaton Tuke would take for her, a very heavy price being broadly hinted at.

The offer tried a poor man's nerve. He had, however, twenty-five pounds unmelted, and the tradesmen, finding that after all he declined to levant with his tail between his legs, and on the contrary hung on and paid ready money, began again to solicit the honour of his patronage. They opined that the gentleman must have some secret source of income, to ruffle it thus jauntily with the best. Revived credit invigorated him to inform the noble lord that he did not desire at present to part with the mare.

Lord Montaigne felt chagrined by this refusal, the more so because it was wholly unexpected. People had whispered abroad the owner's abject impecuniosity; indeed,

for some time he had been practically excluded from such social re-unions as spelt play, on the very honourable ground that men declined to win of a man who could not afford to lose. Yet, poor as he was, his four-legged treasure was not for sale.

Soon, nevertheless, in spite of the welcome influx of credit, the twenty-five vanished, and our friend had to hypothecate his father's chronometer in order to pay the necessary fee for his examination.

Even this money was wasted. He went into the schools in hopes that

> Native cheek, while facts were weak,
> Would swim in triumph through.

Alas, however, that admirable quality —*vis consili expers*—did but accentuate a phenomenal ignorance. The grave examiners could scarcely repress a smile, while listening undergraduates laughed aloud.

On the black evening when Purdue informed him that the examiners had unaccountably forgotten his *testamur*, he took counsel with himself, feeling, as every one else after a similar misfortune, a sadder but a wiser man.

The upshot of this colloquy with his

inner consciousness was a letter to Lord Montaigne, informing him that Loadstone would again be raffled, provided that fifty tickets of five pounds each were subscribed for within forty-eight hours, the entire number to be sixty, whereof ten were already secured by Mr. St Quintin, of "The Tavern."

The bait took. My lord bought half the tickets, and placed the other half. So the raffle came off in Mr. St. Quintin's rooms—St. Quintin happened to be the *alter ego* of Mr. Seaton Tuke—with this result: Loadstone became the property of Mr. St. Quintin, who sold her at once to her original owner for one hundred pounds. About now the strange coincidence of two raffles favouring the owner became a topic of general gossip, and Seaton Tuke's mare the jest of the University. This seemed decidedly unpleasant, and in consequence, that gentleman, finding the atmosphere surcharged with electricity, went down for a term with the design of reading. To be concise, he did read, and actually passed; yet, after so felicitous an issue to a chequered career could not bring himself to desert Alma Mater. His finances justified a brief residence prior to embarking on the hard business of life. His few creditors

preserved an admirable attitude of confident consideration.

Calmly therefore did he settle down to a spell of lotus-eating, and indeed, having no home, remained up during the long vacation.

Towards the end of that dreary blank Mr. St. Quintin descended on Oxford, ostensibly to read with a coach. The *Arcades Ambo* ate together, rode, played écarté, billiards, fives, racquets, and otherwise killed time and butchered opportunities. At the end of the vacation both began to feel the pinch of poverty, Mr. St. Quintin in particular, who was very heavily dipped, hence these cronies laid their heads together with this intent:

Loadstone was to be raffled for the third time, tickets two pounds only, and the owner, to ensure confidence, taking none. It was anticipated that, in the absence of the University, a sufficient sale would be effected among the leading citizens, many of whom coveted a sporting reputation and were as addicted to a gamble as their betters.

The venture proved but partially successful. Seventy pounds out of a grand total of three hundred caused everyone to expect that the raffle would be

withdrawn. That, however, did not represent the game. The mare, which at Tattersall's would have fetched at least three hundred sovereigns—the mare who might have been sold to Lord Montaigne for any sum up to five hundred, was positively raffled with a subscription of barely one-seventh her value.

Curiously—very—the winner this time was Mr. St. Quintin's scout, who subsequently confessed that having been presented gratis with a ticket, he sold his chance to Mr. Seaton Tuke for ten shillings and a bottle of whisky.

The city of Oxford arose in majesty, uttering language of the plainest and most actionable significance. In consequence, Mr. Seaton Tuke disappeared, and early in term sold the mare to Lord Montaigne, whose infamous horsemanship brought the noble animal to smash on Shipton Barrow, where, in the immediate proximity of the remains of British kings, she found her last resting place. With the price she fetched Mr. Seaton Tuke levanted to the United States, where his methods may eventually uplift him to the status of millionaire.

Mr. St. Quintin, after breaking a fond mother's heart and cantering through

the bankruptcy court, reformed his ways, and is now a popular preacher, the idol of old maids and cynosure of young ones. He will probably marry money, and be wretched for ever after.

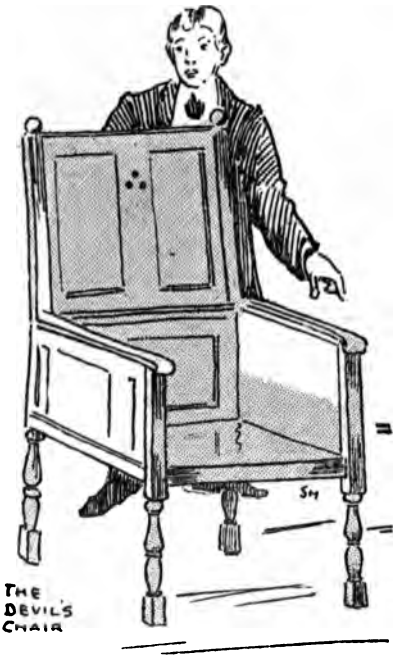
OXFORD RAFFLES

(4) The Devil's Chair

"ALWAYS to be first," was the Athenian motto, but that degree of aristocracy can be attained in more ways than one; thus, whereas Balliol carried the palm for intellect, Jesus for seediness, and Wadham for Puritanism, St. Blasius plumed itself on being *facile princeps* in the matter of wickedness. Pre-eminent among the Mephistopheles of that institution towered Dare, a youth whose proud boast it was to have been expelled from three public schools. In the common-room on an occasion very much after dinner, he proclaimed with gusto that there was no commandment of the decalogue he had not violated, no crime he had not committed. Cheerfully and shamelessly he placed himself on the same pedestal as Robespierre.

"Sure you niver kilt annything mure human than a parthridge!" objected a

lively Irelander, whereupon, with many and horrible imprecations, Dare affirmed that he had committed a foul murder in



Paris, and was wanted by the French police. There being not a scintilla of evidence handy to disprove this confession of guilt, no one cared to dispute it.

"You won't own up to forgery?" suggested a mild sceptic.

"Repeatedly," retorted Dare. "Ask the manager of the County Bank whether there wasn't a hideous row because I counterfeited the governor's signature to a cheque. By George, sir, I did the trick so cleverly that they handed me cash across the counter!"

Here again, evidence of a rebutting character not being forthcoming, the vaunt remained uncontradicted.

"I'll tell you what," jerked out little Tom Tit, after Mr. Dare had been catechised as to every commandment, "there's one crime I'll bet any one a pony Dare won't confess to."

"Done with you," roared Dare.

Mr. Thomas Tit smiled mysteriously, while present company asked themselves whether, inasmuch as a new colour is invented every London season, it could be possible by dint of human ingenuity to devise an entirely undreamt of and original crime.

"Out with it, Tit!" demanded Mr. Dare.

"Quite. *You never cheated at cards!*"

Dare looked from one to the other uncomfortably, a flush of anger suffusing his face. Conscience makes cowards of us all,

and he knew that his luck at whist, van, loo, écarté—every game that can be named—had evolved a strong undercurrent of suspicion. To add to his confusion a titter rapidly magnified into a roar as it became evident that for once he had to pose as the poor innocent.

"Blank it all," he grunted, "I'll pay!" whereupon present company laughed even louder, knowing well that Mr. Dare's virtue was as bogus as his vice. This amazing braggart had given a sort of tone to the college. To be superlatively devilish, so he averred, afforded a short cut to the favour of the fair sex, and as he was much addicted to cataloguing his *bonnes fortunes*, boys fresh from school regarded him as a sublime hero.

In effect Blasius was by no means so bad as its character. It was only suffering from a slight epidemic of *diablerie*. The men were no fools. Rubble, the coach, professed that they could grind up more matter in a week than your ordinary plodder in a month. Nor was Rubble far wrong in his estimate. Brains apart, they were only more harum-scarum than the average. But when, at Dare's suggestion, they launched a Hell-fire Club, the St. Blasius' men showed themselves after all

but feeble imitators of greater sinners. Someone suggested that, with the design of acquiring a reputation for originality, they should style the club "Tartarus." This notion Mr. Dare repudiated with scathing scorn. He wanted to know, by Saturn, if anyone was going to call a black mass, a pink or green mass? Would that be in any sense original? *Nimium ne crede colori!* For himself, as a *cultor frequens diaboli* and firm believer in the good of evil, he voted for the regulation rites. His counsel prevailed.

They did the thing in style. A chair of imposing proportions was purchased and left empty at each *seance* for Mr. Dare's deity. The liquors were potent enough to make a hard head see double. Mr. Dare assured the club that they would sooner or later enjoy a demonic visitation, and one night, when every one was half seas over, contrived to set the tablecloth on fire. Then, while the men rushed to put it out, he neatly inserted a black dummy in the empty chair, whereupon the club bolted for dear life.

That terminated the existence of a club whose worst feature assuredly consisted in the encouragement offered to a superfluous consumption of ardent spirits. Nothing

would induce the Tartareans again to assemble for diabolical orgies. The affair collapsed.

What was to be done with the chair ?

At a meeting of the club—by daylight, of course—it was decided that so interesting a relic ought not to be consigned to oblivion. Someone proposed to present it to the college library, but the dean, a rigid ritualist, exclaimed in horror, "*Retro Sathanas!*" and would have none of it ; indeed, he felt painfully scandalised that St. Blasius should have tampered with demonology, and would have rusticated Mr. Dare but for the warden, who, being a hardened cynic—at least that is what the dean called the good man—simply roared with laughter.

Matters remained *in statu*, until for a grave moral lapse, which was not bogus, Mr. Dare received his *congé* and migrated to the University of Cambridge. Then, *sublatâ causâ tollitur effectus*. There had recently been a strain of new, and less black blood infused into St. Blasius, more in sympathy with the dean than with the devil. A reaction in favour of Christianity ensued, and not a few Tartareans repented in sackcloth and ashes. The college assumed a reformed character. All

the more reason why the "old gentleman's" chair had got to be regarded with superstitious horror. What was to be done with this abomination? It had been stowed away in an empty scout's hole, and lo! in the next room an undergrad was attacked with measles. True, he had imported that puerile complaint from the paternal roof; but, nevertheless, who that valued truth—so it was argued—would pay the slightest attention to second causes? Evidently the measles must be attributed to the devil's chair, and to that evil influence alone! Someone suggested that B—— of Oriel, by reputation an A1 saint, should be summoned to exorcise the chair; others, that the dean would do as well, or better. The remaining Tartareans protested, however, that the secrets of the college ought not to be disclosed, as being contrary to the statutes. Hence, after interminable wrangling, it was agreed that the chair should be raffled for, the winner undertaking to remove it from the college walls. Every undergrad must hold a ticket, willy-nilly. Tickets were to be presented gratis, so nobody had a right to grumble. Several freshmen begged to be excused, but the president of the common-room informed them curtly

that St. Blasius had always—for good or ill—been an united college, and that the vote for the raffle having been passed by a large majority, it became a matter of necessity for all to surrender their personal preferences.

Thus the raffle assumed the complexion of a solemn function—whether religious or irreligious no budding casuist was competent to determine. Nine out of ten ticket holders devoutly implored their patron saint for his assistance. To such an extent had the notion of fatal ill-luck attending the chair influenced the mind of the college that very many surreptitiously burnt their tickets, thereby insuring themselves against a possible win.

As the day for raffling approached the excitement grew more and more intense. A report was spread abroad which accredited the saintly B—— of Oriel to have affirmed that the winner would have to "do time," in the form of a century of purgatory. Indeed *sub rosâ* an attempt was made to induce the warden to interfere, but that divine—an exceedingly jolly Erastian—replied that so long as demoniac influence did not detract from his income it was welcome to take a seat wherever it chose.

Imagine therefore the thrill of horror

which shot through a hundred hearts when the president of the common-room, in a voice tremulous with suppressed emotion, announced that No. 77 had won the prize.

No. 77! and seven the sacred number! A miraculous coincidence surely ?

But No. 77 was not forthcoming. He happened to be one of those who in abject terror of a century of purgatory, plus the fate of Jonah by way of preliminary, had burnt his ticket.

There was nothing for it but to raffle the awful chair *da capo*. Someone bellowed "Burn the blanked thing!" but this suggestion being regarded as impracticable, and the chair itself, a very handsome mediæval oak affair with a cushion of Utrecht velvet, possessing a money value, a second raffle followed, with the result that the dreaded *sedile* fell to the lot of a scholar named Harty, who was neither a Tartarean nor a Roman *quâ* doctrine, but on the contrary a youngster endowed with a stiff backbone, and none the less firm in respect of belief for limiting it by the laws of common sense.

"Poor, poor Harty!" gasped a sympathising friend, "you will die within the year."

"My dear Harty," whispered another,

"let me implore you. Do, do burn the awful thing!"

"If I were you," observed a third, "I would not lose a second in getting B—— of Oriel to exorcise it. You can never tell what may happen."

"Bosh!" responded the sturdy winner. "If I die, I am reverent enough to believe that my death will not be determined by a chair. Nor shall I, to humour a superstitious sentiment, destroy a very excellent piece of furniture. As for exorcise, I'll do it myself with Wills' Birds'-eye."

Harty's confidence was amply justified by circumstances. In his chambers in the Temple that chair figured, and when he devilled for a bigwig the Inn avowed that it was most appropriate. Some people still believe that it smells of Tartarus, but probably this odour has been occasioned by its owner's full flavoured cigars.

OXFORD RAFFLES

(5) Lares and Penates

UNDER the refrigerating influence of reform Oxford is said to have developed three p's —prudery, priggishness, propriety. According to a perverted intelligence, it needs but the addition of Dickens' "Prunes and Prism" to convert the old place into one gigantic New Inn Hall, the site of "the seven deadly sins." There were brave men before Agamemnon, and anterior to the subdominance of the Nonconformist conscience, cleanliness ran godliness a good second.

The following legend dates to a period before the Radicals and rascals of the University had succeeded in making mincemeat of venerable foundations they were much too Philistine to reverence, and much too butchering to spare. The very colleges denounced as malefactors, unfit to live, were at the moment supplying the nation with such a galaxy of talent as has never

been in the slightest degree equalled under a reformed system, with all its interminable lectures and its incessant examinations.

Even the German, Max Müller, avowed himself appalled at the awful mill-wheel reform had invented, in order to crush

originality, and evolve a Brummagem pattern of mediocrity in its victims.

A truce, however, to *laudatio temporis acti*. Enough that in ancient days the education of cultured and generous association, plus ample leisure for thought as well as for play, evolved poets and inspired art-critics, in lieu of pedants and researchers. No doubt the latter answer a utilitarian purpose, only it is at best abominably and atrociously dull. Spirity old Mrs. Macbride, wife of the learned Principal of defunct Magdalen Hall, whose hospitable doors were open only to the "unco' guid," exclaimed on an occasion, when the atmosphere had got to be oppressively rarified, "For pity's sake, Mac, don't ask any more good boys; I like the wicked ones!" In that institution, "Mac" might have sampled a few to suit the old lady, *e.g.*, the late Mr. Winwood Reade—albeit the man who enjoyed a notorious pre-eminence in that direction happened to be a student of Christ Church, and—*proh pudor!*—son of a bishop. As a matter of history, some of the rapidest men in the University were not vicious, if scarcely paragons of virtue, while not a few combined with high spirits and a débonnaire disposition considerable brain power.

Among this lively contingent, Covey, of

St. Benedict's, had somehow, after five years' residence, contrived to take his degree. How he acquired the gown with the elongated sleeves remains a mystery. The trick was not done by reading. That could be sworn to by his intimate friends. Not that it signifies a rap how you succeed so long as you don't fail. We will, therefore, after the manner of the Stagyrite, take fact for our starting point. Mr. Covey, at the time when our brazen legend commences, was as much B.A. as the immortal Mr. Feeder of "Dombey and Son." Nevertheless, the status of the baccalaureate, while it confers many negative sweets, *e.g.*, a release from examinations, lectures, collections, and other nuisances, by way of proving the ugly law of compensation, covers its roses with thorns, and sticks a wasp in every honeysuckle. Not to put too fine a point on a brace of trite metaphors, the thorns and wasps figure certain exasperated duns, with the souls of Shylocks, and the claws of rabid Bengal tigers. *Hos, tu Romane, caveto !*

Now Mr. Covey, in plain English, owed a heap of money. He was strikingly handsome. He had enjoyed a close association with the *crême de la crême* of undergrad society. Some gentlemen plunge, trusting to the buoyancy of such swimming

apparatus as may have been provided by parents and guardians. Mr. Covey had taken his header without so much as a cork in his belt to keep his nose above water. In those days also, a vindictive creditor could incarcerate his victim for a lifetime. The law was merciless, and the unfortunate or improvident who had got into its clutches, had better by far have committed treason or bigamy.

Towards the beginning of the summer term it was passed from mouth to mouth that Covey of St. Benedict's could not pay.

"I don't believe as he's worth a brass farden!" growled Tollevy, the livery stable keeper.

"No, nor me neither," echoed Snippins, the tailor.

"Shell the shentleman up!" snuffled Isaachar, the jeweller.

Thus did deep answer to deep in an infernal antiphon.

Merrily from St. Thomas to St. Clement, from St. Giles to St. John the Baptist, sounded the splenetic chorus, the while writs and summonses were taken out by handsful, and to all appearance the goose of Adonis, Mr. Covey, was cooked.

In London, the process of revenge would have been short and sharp. Whitecross or

the Fleet would have opened their black portals to engulph the delinquent, whose career might be considered a closed account. Not so in more civilised Oxford. There the college walls afforded sanctuary. Messrs. Tollevy, Snippins, Isaachar, and their hosts of Midian might set in motion every engine of the law, but the sturdy porter of St. Benedict's declined to admit a single one of these evil angels across the threshold of the old college. Indeed, being a choleric party of indefinite age, and wattled withal about the gills, his habit was to treat such emissaries of the law to a commons of what he piously termed justifiable blasphemy. Generally, this invaluable servant, in the event of an accidental indulgence of his natural pre-disposition towards highly seasoned English, rendered himself liable to a sconce from the Rev. Euphorbias Gigaud, B.D., the junior dean, who could utter his own "Yea" and "Nay" with a nastiness far exceeding that of the loudest swear-word. However, in a case like this, where the statutable privileges of the college were menaced, a modest latitude might be winked at; thus, an inch being given, the choleric porter, his tongue released from bondage, let fly such an ell as rendered it advisable for the minions of law to sheer off sharp.

From this moment Mr. Covey, forewarned, was forearmed. Lest a surreptitious writ-server should sneak into the

college unobserved, he utilised his friends' rooms, sporting his own oak with defiance. Having before his eyes the alternatives of

Oxford Castle as a place of residence, or St. Benedict's College, he wisely displayed a preference for the latter. But thereby he became necessarily a prisoner, except on Sundays, when it was possible to avenge duresse by a violent constitutional to Cumnor Hurst, or the Wittenham Clumps, to the Happy Valley or Muswell Hill.

As for his friends, they rallied round him to a man. Afternoon whist became an established institution, to relieve the prisoner's *ennui*. The general consumption of tobacco and aërated drinks multiplied tenfold. Ratting matches were held in odd corners of the college. Once and once only, in order to enable him to attend a race meeting, he was smuggled out of college in a cab. But on his return it required all the muscularity of Rullocks the stroke, and Fibby, the glove-man, to ward off Messrs. Effet and Adder, sheriff's officers, who stood one on one side, the other on the other of the only entrance to St. Benedict's, armed to the teeth with injurious parchments. The experiment, though it escaped failure, was deemed too risky to bear repetition—indeed, Mr. Effet and Mr. Adder bitterly complained of darkened optics, and suggested the solatium of a sovereign apiece to tie their venomous tongues. So, willy-

nilly, the gay Covey remained in durance vile.

At length this prolonged gloom was illuminated by a ray of sunshine. In this wise. Mr. Covey might have been a wiser man and yet a better. His sporting propensities had caused him to gravitate in the direction of Tattersall's, and after paying the penalty of inexperience, he had at last acquired the noble art of making a safe book. Indeed, this arithmetical achievement for the Derby gave evidence of a latent mathematical talent, of the sort that in another sphere results in wranglerships, with fellowships to follow. After the great race was run, it transpired that he stood—not only not to lose, which may be deemed passing clever, but to win a nice sum, *i.e.*, supposing his friends came to the scratch on settling-day, a contingency in matters sportive.

His features radiant with joy, Mr. Covey strode into the college hall that night. In a frenzy of triumph, and regardless of the dons at the high table, he waved a telegram to his friends. His winnings sufficed to set him at liberty. Hurrah *in excelsis!*

Alas, that in mundane affairs there should always exist the chance of a slip between the cup and the lip. Mr. Covey's exhilaration

proved to have been sadly premature. One of a batch of betting friends, on whose solvency he could have staked his very boots, turned defaulter, thereby reducing the total from four to a paltry one hundred pounds all told.

Que faire?

Relations had long since been milked dry, and withal avowed themselves simply outraged at a career sustained only by repeated applications to the milking pail. Friends? Well, to do the gentleman justice he never had been a sponge. From the day he left Eton to the present, he had always borne his fair share with the rest. Whatever the pool might be, his money went into it. A too flexible vintner and an amiable tobacconist might gnash their teeth, but were the only sufferers. With his intimates he had consistently squared the debt of hospitality honourably.

A council of war was held that Black Monday evening in his rooms.

"It's a clean mucker, dear old chap!" remarked Jigger, who had won the cue at Bickerton's, and covered his college with glory in the single match against Cambridge, scoring, according to the dictum of Jonathan, as if he were inspired.

This pessimist doctrine found an echo all

round. The case seemed to contain within itself every element of finality.

"Wh—what do you think of doing?" inquired little Cotton, in a lamentable voice, expressive of almost feminine sympathy. *Apropos*, little Cotton had come into four

thousand a year from his papa, a Lancashire slave driver, and it was not all melted. He could afford a passing tear for a friend's descent to Avernus.

"Smoke," replied Mr. Covey, pointing in his ancient and freehanded fashion to the

last box of Bobo's. "And I say, Jigger, open that cupboard, will you, and knock the necks off the bottles? You'll find tumblers somewhere handy."

"Whatever you do, Jigger, don't!" protested Jack Pottle, whose nasal appendage was colouring beautifully by steady application of his mouth to vintage port. "I never travel without the Christian's *vade mecum*." And he fished out, as from his inner consciousness, a pocket corkscrew.

With the aid of that useful implement corks were extracted with the *aplomb* of a prize dentist, and the company settled down to discuss the business before them.

"*Siccis omnia dura Deus proposuit!*" laughed Mr. Cotton, dropping the lugubrious under the beneficent spell of Falernian. "Look here, old fellow, if I were you, with your Piccadilly weepers—"

"Thanks!" interrupted Mr. Covey, much as though he meant, "Belay that."

"If I were you, I'd take a ticket for Baden or Ischl, or some of those shops where coin and petticoats go into partnership, and I'd marry an heiress. The older the better, because you'd then have a chance of a second edition revised and improved."

"Bosh!" protested Mr. Jigger, not giving Mr. Covey the chance of negativing

this little scheme. "A man with the wits of our friend Covey, ought to be able to live anywhere. Pool, pyramids, loo, will support an intelligent being on either side of the Channel in comfort, if not in luxury, so long as civilisation infests society."

"Obliged, gentlemen all!" responded Mr. Covey, removing a huge cigar from his mouth. "Your sentiments do you honour and me proud. But I may say without the crutch of other fellow's brains, that I have arrived at my own conclusion"—this with marked emphasis.

"Name!" from a score of voices.

"The diggings."

"The demon!" ejaculated Mr. Pottle, tossing off a tumblerful in his supreme agitation.

"That's my tip," laughed Mr. Covey, not quite naturally. "I've had a very jolly innings, and scored fairly. That last twister, however, has knocked off the bails, so, instead of wrangling with the umpire, I intend to shoulder my bat, and retire from the scene."

"Skittles, Covey!" vociferated little Cotton. "Ostracism is unworthy the soul of an Athenian. Come, if you want a hundred or so—'

"Halt!" interposed Mr. Covey almost

sternly. "It's quite like you, Cotton, to do the magnanimous. But, with all appreciation—no! Gravelled I may be; but not yet down to plundering my pals. That's the very last feather, and it generally breaks the camel's back."

"But I mean it," urged little Cotton impulsively.

"Of course; of course you do, my dear fellow. However, I must ask the college to

regard my fate—bar pun—as a *fait accompli*. But I am going to ask one favour—"

"Anything! Everything!" resounded in chorus.

Whereupon Mr. Covey proceeded to state that having already secured his passage in an outbound steamer, he proposed forthwith to raffle his household gods—pictures, books, ornaments, and all the accessories of his pretty rooms. They would make up, he reckoned, into about fifty lots, and he would issue a hundred tickets of a pound each—fifty prizes, fifty blanks.

"But," objected Mr. Jigger, "your assets have cost you at least two hundred or more. Double the price of tickets."

Mr. Covey, however, affirmed that the terms could not be varied, so with the aid of Messrs. Cotton and Pottle, the lots were arranged, and notice sent round announcing a raffle for eleven p.m.

At that hour the bulk of the men in residence turned up, and tickets were readily applied for. They had placed the numbers folded in a waste-paper basket, and while Mr. Cotton constituted himself master of the ceremonies, Mr. Covey, at the earnest request of his friends, absented himself from an affair calculated to abrade even his masculine sensibilites. Men in those pre-

adamite days took a pride in their rooms, and made them models, alike of comfort and elegance. It was an era when Euphues dressed somewhat gorgeously ; when a black morning coat was lined as regards the sleeves with ruby silk ; when heavy watch chains, carbuncle pins and rings, were simply *de rigueur*, if the reproach of smugdom was to be escaped. Blazers had not been invented, nor the proletarian *deshabille* of the reformed epoch. One need not draw individual comparisons, the choice being between the fop with address and overdress, and the prig, without either the merit of the one, or the demerit of the other.

" Now, gentlemen," began little Cotton, " I put it to the vote. Shall we draw by seniority, alphabetical order, or on what principle ? "

Seniority appearing to commend itself to the collective conscience of present company, Mr. Cotton requested Mr. Simpkinson, a scholar, as senior undergrad, to forthwith open the ball by helping himself to one of the lots.

With a broad and saponaceous smirk, Mr. Simpkinson, who had been intruded on an otherwise gentlemanly college by virtue of being the pet prodigy of an obscure grammar school—as Disraeli would have phrased it,

"On the nonsense of merit"—and though transparently destitute of a grandfather, voted himself quite treble X, grabbed a ticket, exclaiming with a stertorous guffaw, "*Macte virtute!* I've won his sealskin coat!"

It was even so. To make up the requisite number of lots, Mr. Covey had thrown in a brand new sealskin, value sixty guineas.

As no one seemed disposed to chime in with Mr. Simpkinson's unhallowed mirth,

the drawing proceeded, and after that certain effects had been scattered abroad, Mr. Jigger won, as his lot, an exquisite meerschaum.

"Thank the stars!" was his pious ejaculation. "Poor old Covey always took a pride in this, and, by Jove, it will just do to cheer him on his voyage!"

Somehow the idea thus broached by the gentle Jigger must have touched an harmonious chord. With the single exception of the scholar, Simpkinson, who like the "Miller of the Dee," cared for nobody, no, not he, every Benedictine sympathised with the handsome fellow doomed to expatriation. Hence one man after another, as he drew an item of Mr. Covey's lares, vowed then and there to offer it, after the example of Mr. Jigger, as a parting gift. At last Mr. Pottle, who happened to have attained a condition not quite unlike that of old Silenus, put in his thumb, and drew out by way of plumb—*the bedstead!*

"Wash us'h of thish?" hiccupped this most pleasant of companions. "Can't schleep in two bedsh at onesh! Wash th' us'h of it? Thash wall I wan' to know?"

"All right, Potts," exclaimed Mr. Cotton impatiently, as he remarked that party's hopeless obfuscation. "Now, gentlemen,

those who wish to subscribe for a testimonial to a downright good fellow—I'd better perhaps put it in that way—will remain. All unwilling to join in this send-off to our friend may withdraw "—this with a side glance at chuckling Simpkinson.

As a matter of fact everyone stayed, Simpkinson constituting himself a noteworthy exception, and making a swaggering exit, bearing the valuable prize on his arm. A slight hiss followed; but he heard not, or affected an opportune deafness.

No sooner was the door shut than the big hearted, if small bodied, Cotton rose to the occasion. "I perceive," said he, "that the college is all but united in its resolve to display our sympathy for old Covey in a practical form." (Yoicks! from the bibulous Pottle, who was supposed to remark further, "Should li' drink his heal'—should!")

"Now, I need not remind you that the friend we are so soon to lose does not own the insensate article of a Simpkinson, nor, to put it plainer, the hide of a rhinocerous. For that reason we ought to be very careful not to wound his manly sensibilities. I propose, therefore, that those of you as have won portable goods, such as pipes, photographs, and any object he might care to have by way of memento, should present

them in person. For myself, having become the proud possessor of a tea-kettle and a saucepan, I occupy a different position. My idea is for those who have won articles of furniture, to sell them and forward to him the proceeds. Depend upon it, the poor chap will need hard cash sorely when he finds himself among strangers, and these of a roughish type, on the t'other side of this little floating ball."

A ringing cheer greeted these hearty words; the motion was carried *nem con*, and the meeting separated, leaving arrangements to be carried through by Mr. Cotton.

So far, so good, but Messrs. Jigger and Cotton felt none the less mighty indignant with Scholar Simpkinson. Had he been a Jew usurer, he could not have reaped so rich a harvest out of the necessities of a poor man. In round numbers, he had pocketed fifty-nine to one, inasmuch as the coat was well worth the original price, and would have proved of incalculable value to a traveller. The case exactly paralleled that of Glaucus:

"Χαλκεα *donanti* Χρυσεα *qui dederat.*"

—a pound of gold for a pound of brass.

"This," forcibly remarked Mr. Jigger, "represents a style of peculati[illegible]hat must

not be permitted in a respectable college. We must adopt measures, yes, measures, Cotton, to checkmate that swindler, Simpkinson!"

"Certainly!" answered little Cotton, "only it might be more lucid to give them a definition."

"My dear chap," returned his friend, "as a venerable billiarder, let me remind you how Carlyle performed the spot stroke when he remarked that 'speech is brazen; silence silver-lead.' I should be sorry to deprive any one the luxury of a genuine surprise."

On the morrow, after many a generous grasp of many a manly hand, Mr. Covey left Oxford. Messieurs Effet and Adder were *de rigueur* standing at attention in front of the college gate; but so dense was the crowd to see the last of a good fellow, that these reptiles were easily hustled to one side, as with a final wave of his umbrella he cried, "*Sic me servavit Apollo!*" His intimates had insisted on packing his portmanteau, a kindly office, which afforded them the opportunity of inserting surreptitiously his favourite meerschaum, and a varie[illegible] other treas[illegible] whereunto Mr. Cott[illegible] *motu* ad[illegible] *leau* of bank note[illegible] ce in [illegible] t caused

Mr. Covey much searching of heart, after he again touched *terra firma*. Thus, like the baseless fabric of a vision, he passed away from the festive scene, amid the benedictions of the young and warm-hearted, amid also the hideous maledictions of Oxonian mongers, who nevertheless, by a judicious manipulation of other accounts, somehow saved themselves from ultimate loss. Don't pity them. A bankrupt shopkeeper in a University town is a rarer spectacle than a dead donkey.

Although it called itself the merry (?) month of May, and was tottering on the verge of June, the weather had turned colder than December. Everybody grumbled. Everybody also shivered—among others Scholar Simpkinson, of whom it might have been predicted that much swatting had made him bilious. As a natural consequence this not very unselfish party, when he took his walks abroad, elected to sport Mr. Covey's sealskin. Critics compared him to a hog in armour; none the less he rejoiced to believe that every one would now rate him as a ten thousand a year man, to whom sovereigns were of less account than sixpences to the less beatified. Moreover, the transformation appeared all the more thaumaturgic, inasmuch as his own habili-

ments were of a bucolic cut, suggesting the highest art of the lowest village tailor. At that time St. Benedict's plumed itself on being *simplex munditiis*, yet much the reverse of sordid. The men were well booted and gloved, well hat-brushed, and up to a lofty level of sartorial propriety. To such samples of supreme fitness Simpkinson was upheld as a solemn warning.

Among those who took note of the leopard having changed his spots was the astute Jigger. It riled his inmost soul to witness this swaggering snob in his old friend's luxurious *superpelicium*. The spectacle savoured even more of profanation than of burlesque, and caused the champion billiarder to register a solemn vow by all his saints, that he would stop it ; and when Mr. Jigger made up his mind to anything, be it cannon or pocket, bar accidents, it came off.

The right moment soon arrived. Placards of startling longitude, bristling with sesquipedalian bombast and impossible illustrations, adorned the various hoardings of suburban Oxford, announcing that Signor Tompkinson's renowned troupe, for one night only, would give a grand performance, when Mdlle. Tumbarelli would escape annihilation by half a hair's breadth ; the Red Rover of

the Mexican Prairie would bestride twenty barebacked steeds; and Herr Abtritt, the incomparable German clown, contemplated turning himself inside out, with the design of throwing his audience into convulsions. All that, of course, in more *circuitous* terminology. The whole to conclude with the important, impressive and improving moral spectacle of "Claude Duval," the highwayman; Claude Duval—for the nine hundredth time—to be personated by the great Tompkinson himself. Admission—sixpence.

Now under ordinary circumstances, Scholar Simpkinson, who, although a sort of competition-wallah, lacked the grace of brilliance, substituting for genius a more than slavish plodding, would have scorned a circus. He was just now grinding ferociously with the ulterior hope of landing a second or third class—a first being miles over his head. Hence, time to him represented gold, and could not be bartered for mere amusement. Yet, if fired with the ignoble ambition of attaining inferior distinction, the man's soul was malleable in one direction. Not to mystify, he was ready to eat his hat, or drink corked wine, to be *audax omnia perpeti*, for money. The instinct may have been hereditary, since

his people adhered to one of those persuasions which think the worship of God is that of mammon. Anyhow, he was obsessed by *auri sacra fames*.

Avarice it was, then, which fetched him. Everyone realised his weak point. Just as a glass of good liquor would have bribed Jack Pottle to fight a cad, cheek a proctor, or for the matter of that, ride a donkey up and down The High, his face to the tail, habited in a surplice, so a fiver was lever potential enough to convert Mr. Simpkinson from a blatant Radicalism to honest Toryism, or from the fanaticism of the conventicle to the sobriety of rigid orthodoxy.

"I'll bet you, Simpkinson, an even quid, that you don't show in sealskin at the circus, and sit the performance out!"—thus the tempter, Jigger. The pupils of the man's orbits distended. A whole sovereign! Twenty shillings. No, no; it won't do to exaggerate!—nineteen and six. The claims of Plato were very urgent—very; but no, *magis amicum aurum*. He would not refuse such a chance. "Make it a guinea, Jigger, and I'm your man. Stop, though. The coin must be staked."

"Right!" answered Mr. Jigger. "Shall we make Cotton the holder?"

"Done!"

"Mind you," added Mr. Jigger, "if you show in any other guise except sealskin, you lose; or if you don't sit out the preformance, also in sealskin. Is that a clear understanding?"

"Perfectly clear. You are witness, Cotton!"

Yes, he was witness—very much witness.

The evening of Signor Tompkinson's unparalleled performance (*soi-disant*) witnessed one of those rapid atmospheric transitions which render the climate of England so very much the reverse of monotonous. Not to be diffuse, the frigid temperature of the previous week, suggestive of Nuova Zembla at double zero, without a note of warning, abruptly changed to a vapour bath. Sherry-cobbler came in with a rush, and iced cream usurped the place in the mesenteric regions of iced air.

Rough that on Scholar Simpkinson, who began to rue his wager. Nevertheless, the bare thought of parting—as the song hath it—was such pain, that he resolved to grill himself rather than lose. Accordingly, with Mr. Covey's grandoise sealskin coat on his arm, he strolled off to the meadow where Signor Tompkinson had encamped, the precise locality whereof could be distin-

guished for a good half mile by the fearsome bray of a battered cornet, which never by any chance struck an interval; but when not excruciatingly sharp, was distressingly flat.

At the entrance of the tent he found himself the cynosure of a select coterie of Benedictines, who might have been dining, so merry were they. Indeed, when with the view of winning his wager, he donned the very warm sealskin, it became evident that, if he did win, the pals of Mr. Jigger meant to take it out in chaff.

"Beastly cold!" laughed little Cotton, simulating a sneeze.

"Shivery shakery! Oh, oh, oh, the man that couldn't get warm!" trolled bibulous Jack Pottle.

"*Vides ut nive stet?*" remarked an anonymous gentleman of some other college.

Nor were the waggeries of the bystanders confined to verbal *badinage*. Mr. Simpkinson, by universal acclamation was voted a cat. Cries of "Pussy! miaow! tss!" arose around, while intrusive fingers stroked the fur of his garment in a vein of sarcastic playfulness, and he felt something like perspiration moistening the starch of his collar. Glad, therefore, was the sweltering man to pay his sixpence and bolt inside. Indeed, the performance had already com-

menced, and Mdlle. Tumbarelli, in a costume which for airiness contrasted with his own, was exhibiting her fair proportions on the back of a steed, painted to represent a maple door.

Scarcely had he come to an anchor when Mr. Jigger, planting himself by his side in oppressively close proximity—the circus certainly was over full—groaned dolefully, "I say, Simpkinson, this is quite too bad. You mean to win my money."

"Rather!" sounded the uncompromising response. Our plodding scholar's temper had all but got the better of him. He never relished chaff, and already had swallowed enough to choke a donkey.

"It's precious hot. We shall have a thunderstorm in half a jiffey. Hadn't you better slip off your great coat?"—this in a bland tone of persuasiveness.

"Ha! ha!" roared Mr. Simpkinson. "Not if I know it! Do you take me for a greenhorn? Let those laugh who win. I mean to—laugh!"

"What?" quoth Jigger, in a slightly altered tone, "You won't be persuaded, won't you? Bet you another quid you take off your coat before the end of this affair?"

"No, thanks! You can keep your money."

"A quid's a quid."

"Didn't say it was a fiver. By Jove, what a pip that female has gone!" This in reference to La Tumbarelli, who being rather heavier weighted than an ordinary cherub, had contrived to lose her balance, and whereas she had been staggering round the ring on the maple patterned pad, now occupied a sedent posture, not altogether on the lines of classical grace.

"Delightful!" remarked Mr. Jigger. "Nothing like realism in art. I love the naturalesque, even when the poetry of motion descends to prose."

The unlucky Tumbarelli, however, appeared to hold another opinion, inasmuch, as in lieu of endeavouring according to the etiquette of the *haute école* to recover her missing tip, she limped off on the fostering arm of Signor Tompkinson, much as if she had had enough poetry for the immediate present.

A circus, whereunto lovers and their lasses resort in order to devour oranges and nuts, whereunto the wily counterjumper betakes himself in order to shake off the *ennui* of reiterating "Three-three farthings," or "Cash!" is one thing, and a circus infested by a few hundred lively undergrads, quite another. In the one case the professionals

perform, and the audience stares, grins, applauds; in the other the regulars find themselves to a great extent relieved of catering for the public's gratification, inasmuch as the sportive youngsters seem quite able to amuse themselves.

Thus the performance proceeds merrily enough, the old crusted jokes of the clowns being quite eclipsed by academic wit, until the final tableau, entitled "The Moral Drama of Claude Duval, the Gentleman Highwayman." Here the title rôle was assumed by the Signor in person, attired in a coat whose flap pockets were filled to the brim with horse pistols, supported by La Tumbarelli, who having been liquored up into a state of convalescence after her ugly pip, danced on the hind quarters of the maple pattern with the zest, if not the elegance, of Cerito, her sweet form saved from a second fall by the manly arm of the Signor.

This exquisite moral spectacle, as the bills termed it, was welcomed with roars of merriment. It may not have been altogether because Herr Abtritt, the clown, in cracky Anglo-German, trotted forth "Johnny Smoker," imitating every instrument in the orchestra. It was rather that everyone had attained a condition of exaltation, and was prepared to laugh at anything, or nothing.

The climax was reached when Claude Duval, after stopping the mail, invited Tumbarelli to dance a coranto. She being short and fat, he pretty much length without breadth, the coranto was attended with ridiculous difficulty, and the under-

grads' sallies and cheers recalled the licence of The Sheldonian at Commemoration.

In the midst of this glorious shindy, when it seemed as if the performance would terminate in a kind of anarchic chaos,—presto, with a boom, a blue ball of fire

suddenly ascended from the very centre of the audience, passed straight through the top of the tent like a bullet, and so forth into the night. This was followed at once by a series of fizzes and cracks, another sulphur ball, yet another, and then—

With a yell of supreme anguish, Scholar Simpkinson, to all appearance bursting with fire at every pore, dashed madly through the fray into the ring.

"Put him out! Water! Roll him on the ground! Help!" with fifty other abortive cries, rent the air, adding infinitely to an insane confusion, while the burning man issued forth fireworks to every point of the compass.

"Take off his coat, you duffers!" sounded a voice somewhat resembling that of Mr. Jigger.

Promptly and resolutely this suggestion was acted upon. Mr. Covey's gorgeous garment, dragged from the writhing body of the sibilant scholar, fell ignominiously on the ground smouldering, riddled with holes, and occasionally emitting noisy pyrotechnics.

"Hello! hello!" bawled the unfeeling Mr. Jigger, surveying the crestfallen Simpkinson; who, though a trifle singed, was really more frightened than hurt. "Why

didn't you have the presence of mind to take off your coat ? "

" Ugh ! " was all Mr. Simpkinson could gurgle forth, in divine disgust.

" About our bet ? Eh, Simpkinson ? "

" I—I—I—protest."

" What do you say, umpire ? " asked Mr. Jigger, turning to Mr. Cotton.

That gentleman said nothing, but handed over the two guineas. Then, as he turned away, leaving Simpkinson to the maternal care of La Tumbarelli, he whispered : " Too bad, Jigger, too bad ! But Jove be praised for the avenging of Covey ! "

OXFORD RAFFLES

(6) Chasubles

SOME wise man—Wordsworth at a guess?—aphorised that the child is father of the man. He may have meant by this solemn platitude, that the instincts of childhood anticipate those of mature years, whereof indeed they form the embryo; and perchance, as the French would put it, he had reason. None the less, I should prefer to invert the above maxim, and hazard an opinion, that men are but grown-up children, largely infantine, as thus: just as lovely woman takes for her one ideal—dress; for her one hagiology—her wardrobe; and for her one reliquary—her jewel case; so the male sex exhibits a parallel devotion to toys.

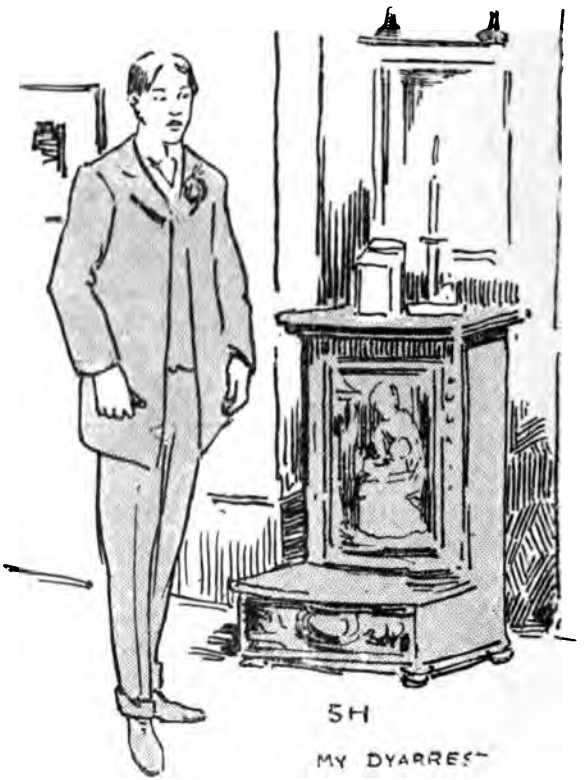
"Toys!" you echo in scorn. "What can the fellow be thinking about?" I reply in the dictum of the Scottish rhymer:—

"'Boots?' quo' he. 'Aye, boots!' quo' she.
'Ye auld, blind, blinking body.'" etc., etc.

which perhaps may be very hot for my objector, not to say vituperative, albeit strong convictions sometimes evoke muscularity of diction. Men, I repeat, at the risk of contradiction, are quite as spoony on their toys as ever was little girl on her wax doll, whose azure eyes, if you pulled a trigger somewhere in the abdominal region, would turn up like the typical duck in a thunderstorm, or by a vehement exercitation of the said trigger totally collapse.

The question arises, What do I mean by toys? Suffer me to reply with Oriental circumlocution. We will take the case of Jones—Gelatinous, or "Gell" Jones, he used to be styled at Eton by reason of certain fleshly peculiarities. Well, Gell, with ten thousand per annum spends at least nine-tenths of his rent-roll on quadrupeds. Smith again, with double Gell's income, and a magnificent social position, lives, moves, breathes—one might almost say perspires—in his yacht. Brown, on the other hand, who never crossed a horse's back, and would shiver at the bare thought of a voyage from Cowes to Ryde, being of a strictly practical turn, gives his whole soul to sewage. If you dine with him he insists on your tasting water which certainly looks crystalline. Whereupon, after you have sacrificed your

vital organs in order to humour his whim, you are horrified to learn on the word of honour of a gentleman, that every drop



was extracted from a cesspool by his patent process. The thought that in him you have

a man of scrupulous truthfulness, is far from reassuring—indeed, at such a moment you would hail mendacity as the chiefest of virtues. In vain you hug a paradoxical belief that patentees never hesitate to perform sham miracles in order to bolster up their inventions. It won't do. Later in the evening, when the tongue of Brown, fortified by champagne, has begun to wag like a pendulum agitated by an electric current, your ear can but detect a curious obligato on the part of that same patentee to "I would that my love," which the Misses Brown are trolling. It is the voice of their papa explaining his patent process to deaf Lady Stickington, who doesn't quite know under the circumstances whether the polite thing is to be charmed or horrified! Now, not to slop over, I maintain that these citizens of credit and renown reproduce the ruling passion of childish years. Jones at the tender age of six used to ride his hobby-horse; Smith was addicted to sailing small craft in a pond; whilst Brown dearly loved the manufacture of little dirt pies. Each still pursues his favourite toy—enlarged, of course—as the *summum bonum* worth living for; with this difference, that whereas in childhood the female autocrat of the nursery checked the idolatry of a plaything, any

amount of blind fatuity in regard of horses, yachts, or drains will ensure in mature years the plaudits of society, and may end in securing public recognition.

Of all places where toys for the adult are most plentiful, commend me to old Oxford. Apart from the heart-whole affection of the juniors for horses, rowing boats, billiard cues and other vehicles towards reputation, their seniors collect libraries to be sold by their executors ; or prints ; or mediæval missals ; or wood-carving, or pre-Raphaelite pictures.

Somewhat on this lay was Mr. Orphrey of St. Swithin's—albeit he had not yet surmounted "Mods." Vulgar people reviled him as a ritualist, accrediting one of the gentlest of his species with a Satanic ambition of resuscitating the holy office of the Inquisition. As a matter of fact, the man was a harmless æsthete filled with the enthusiasm of mediævalism. The worst his friends could allege against him was, that he would like to be an animated stained-glass saint, for he had carried a passion for that variety of toy to an extreme, and would have been more at home in South Kensington than amid the eupeptic Philistinism of a gay Oxford college.

"'What, then, is love,' sings Corydon,

'since Phillida is grown so coy?'" runs the old Elizabethan madrigal, and the answer to this query affirms, that the sublime passion amounts to no more than "a serious toy." It was thus that Mr. Orphrey regarded his collection of works of ecclesiastical art. A connoisseur, though perhaps but little above the level of an amateur, he was beset with a craze for purchasing the *chef d'œuvres* of the sanctuary, for future use, *i.e.*, when some years hence he should be duly priested. He had fitted up his bed-room, bar the bed, curtained off as an oratory, with appropriate fittings. Huge oak cases contained copes and chasubles, while he discarded his trencher cap in favour of a biretta. As you opened the door of his rooms, you groped somehow through a heavy curtain bearing symbols worked in cloth of gold, crucifixes, prie-dieus, Overbeckian prints, Hardmanian brass, and Skidmorian ironwork, Munich statuary—in a word, all the pomp and circumstance of gorgeous ritual, plus a small Scudamore organ, whereon reposed mediæval music in black letter—all these properties made up his appointments, and if you desired to adopt a sedentary posture, your sole chance was a rush-bottomed chair of dimensions adapted to a very lean anchorite.

The above treasures, however, paled into insignificance when contrasted with the vestments piously deposited in the above-mentioned oak chests. It was rumoured that in secret Mr. Orphey would invest his delicate frame with these garments of glory, and perform occult functions for the delectation of his crony, Mr. Reredos. That doubtless amounted to malicious scandal. The profane Mr. Rapax, quoting from Dean Stanley, styled all these vestments the "rags of the Flamen's vestry." Other members of the college showed a less Philistine spirit, and went so far as to express an opinion sub-audibly, lest they should challenge a harsh public opinion, that they were things of beauty and a joy for ever. Viewed apart from prejudice, their gorgeous polychrome seemed impressive, and at that time of day the Noncomformist conscience had not penetrated and permeated St. Swithin's College. Even such splendid specimens of manhood as Mr. Pompone had been heard to hint that "Rome was the real thing, only devilish impossible, don't you know?"

Another and more damaging libel affirmed that Mr. Orphrey in his exalted enthusiasm, had put on his chasubles hind before, after the manner of the "rhyme of St. Bryanne

O'Lynne," who inverted a sheepskin, his sole covering during the prevalence of extreme cold, and came to grief accordingly. Here again gossip displayed a singular poverty of invention, inasmuch as the mediæval undergrad knew his subject thoroughly. One thing, however, he did not know, and that was the value of money. Ecclesiastical art is much too lovely to be cheap. There are those who regard its moral worth as something below zero ; its costliness can hardly be disputed. Now Mr. Orphrey, to put the issue plainly, had plunged. Had he performed this feat on the turf, they would have epitaphed him good fellow. Having accomplished it in the toy shop he was voted fool, especially when it transpired that after having expended all his available cash, he still owed the trifling sum of five hundred pounds on his hobby.

This arithmetical truism, when he grappled it, proved more than appalling, chiefly because his relatives, a set of charitable souls who respected " Foxe's Martyrology " and despised the Fathers, would have consigned themselves to a straight waistcoat in the nearest asylum, had they so much as dreamt that the hope of the family had thus been dallying with the

Scarlet Lady. To them he could not possibly appeal. He would have been cut off with a shilling. Moreover, he had been terribly frightened owing to the skittishness of his crony, Reredos; as thus: that gentleman, who blended mirth with mediævalism, entertained a feeling of sardonic enmity against that highly reputable low church organ, *The Discord*. It occurred to his inventive genius that to hoax his pet detestation would be pre-eminently agreeable. Accordingly, after scrawling some doggerel Latin rhymes, expressing such hot Mariolatry as would assuredly have secured a niche in the Index, he indited an anonymous epistle to the editor in an assumed vein of Protestant indignation, demanding to know whether functions in honour of the B.V.M. ought to be tolerated, and describing with all the fidelity of pure romance these offices as performed within the walls—not of St. Swithin's—he was too wide awake for that—but of Brazenface, an institution singularly free from any religion whatsoever. This letter he headed with the B.F.C. arms by way of verification, and the editor of *The Discord*, overjoyed at discovering a real mare's nest, not only printed it, but further commented thereupon in a leader, solemnly advising parents

to avoid as pitch B.F.C. College, and Oxford generally. Of course, when the truth transpired, *The Discord* foamed at the mouth, and was speechless with indignation. But B.F.C. contemptuously refused to admit any complicity with an unpopular cult, and to trace the author resembled the search for a ritualist needle in a bundle of Erastian hay.

The row, none the less, made Mr. Orphrey shiver, he being not unnaturally a suspected person. *The Discord* was enacting a passion in tatters. The vice-chancellor had been appealed to, detectives were employed, and it looked as if he was going to be sacrificed to the vagary of his friend, Reredos. The situation had grown tense.

"What *is* to be done, my dyarrest Dens?" he whined in a feeble monotone, addressing Mr. Reredos by his Christian name.

"I cannot by any stretch of imagination elucidate your problem, my dyarrest Orphrey," was the glib reply.

"I—I—I don't relish parting with my all," sobbed the other. "You see, it might be consigned to secular uses."

"The sacrilege of Belshazzar!" echoed his friend.

"And yet—and yet, my dyarrest Dens, I do not see my way clear. The affair would

appear to have reached its penultimate stage. In fact—to make a plenary confession—I have learnt a lesson in the philosophy of credit. First, your tradesman implores your custom. Next comes a sesquipedalian account, designated your *esteemed favour*. That represents the grovelling phase, and like most things of beauty, is evanescent. A reminder rapidly follows in the shape of 'To bill delivered,' wherein the subterraneous harshness is veiled by a request for further orders. The suggestion of a payment on account shows that 'bill delivered' has waxed by several pounds; and if not responded to, a crisis occurs, all subsequent communications being more or less impudent. Your once affectionate creditor avows himself first surprised, then minatory, lastly vindictive. At that stage he disappears, to be replaced by Messrs. Gryppe and Skynne, whose minion takes up a position outside your oak, and finally you are served with a writ. That, I deeply regret to state, my dyarrest Dens, is the hard fate of your friend Ambrose Orphrey of St. Swithins."

My "dyarrest" looked very much like Eliphaz, the Temanite, after he swallowed a cruet of vinegar—indeed, a very sorry Job's comforter.

"You are scarcely suggestive," whined Mr. Orphrey testily.

"*Ex nihilo nihil fit*" pleaded his friend with a long attempt at a saccharine smile. "Were I in your shoes at the present moment, I'd——"

"Well, Reredos, out with it."

"Simply, I'd cut the knot of my difficulties by raffling the whole blessed lot."

"Reredos," exclaimed Mr. Orphrey, "I'm disgusted with your indecent levity."

"Pooh!" retorted my dyarrest Dens, with a suspicion of contempt in his voice. "You'll be a deal more disgusted if Gryppe and Skynne get a judgment against you in the vice-chancellor's court."

No logic could have proved more convincing. The terrible tribunal presided over by the vice-chancellor is armed with a potentiality almost unlimited. It can imprison, fine, distrain; it can also expel from the University. To avoid the jaws of such a megatherium any sacrifice appeared tolerable, even a reckless iconaclasm of sacred sensibilities.

Accordingly the columns of the *Church Times* and *Church Review* announced that a raffle would take place in Verdigris' auction-rooms, High Street, Oxford, of certain superior articles of ecclesiastical art,

duly catalogued. Tickets to the number of five hundred, one guinea each. The prizes all told, only fifty. But then, were they not prizes, indeed! They had cost Mr. Orphrey considerably over four figures.

Now, as we are already aware, the books of St. Swithin's contained the names, not only of such ideal mediævalists as Messrs. Orphrey and Reredos, but also the magnificent Pompone and the light-hearted Temperly, the absorbent Rapax and the whimsical Bumpus. To these, one and all, the prospect of an ecclesiastical raffle seemed fraught with possible amusement.

About this time Mr. Pompone, having parted with a substantial fee, contrived to get himself initiated into some surprisingly tall degree in Masonry, thereby acquiring the prescriptive right of dressing-up in the costume of King Richard I. Such stage properties as may be requisite to convert a modern young Englander into a Crusader, having been ordered and duly delivered, Mr. P. invited a select circle of friends to inspect his handsome person attired in a new and highly picturesque guise.

Unanimous verdict—Superb!

Taking up a position on the hearthrug so as to show the picture on its obverse, he suryeyed himself in the glass with modest

satisfaction. In the judgment of his peers he entirely concurred.

"D'haw!" he ejaculated, stroking a decidedly crusading moustache, "what do you fellows think of my diamonds?"

"Dud — diamonds!" stuttered Mr. Bumpus, scornfully surveying certain *soi-disant* "jewels" inserted into these vestments of chivalry.

"Exaactly!" murmured the august Pompone, as out of the corner of his eye he perceived a cloud of incredulity pervading the admiring countenance of present company. "They are f'hamily diamonds."

"They may be *f'hamily* diamonds," retorted waspish Mr. Bumpus, "but they are not diamonds!"

"D'haw! Exaactly!" replied the imperturbable Pompone, casually lighting a cigar. "Have some champagne?"

Moral majesty itself could not abash the big man.

Thus delivering himself, an index finger pointed laterally in the direction of a bracket, to which he desired general attention. Thereupon reposed a glass barrel, under the silvern tap whereof was stationed suggestively a tumbler. The barrel—a work of art—might at a guess hold six magnums. It was full.

The eyes of Mr. Rapax gleamed with pure pleasure, as he sidled thitherwards with eager velocity. Then, lest the initiative should appear selfish, he signalled to Mr. Temperly with, "Whatever you do, don't be shy!" as a glass of the seductive fluid disappeared to the last drop.

Thus challenged, gilded youth could but respond dutifully. "You ought to go in for Stinks' Honours, Pom," was his suggestion.

"D'haw, Temperly, why?"

"Because you seem an adept in *fizzical* science."

"Haw—hum—exaactly. Bestial. I hate small jokes. Try another."

"Wherever did you get that barrel from?" demanded Mr. Bumpus.

"D'haw! From Long Skittleton of 'The Blues.' Skittleton is about the l'hatitude of a worm. I mean, of course, in proportion to his l'hongitude. His liquors have to travel an immense distance before they get c'homfortably settled. So he invented that little affair to secure a c'honstant supply to an ever-recurring demand."

"Give it up," growled Mr. Bumpus.

"Haw! This way. Skittleton lies flat on his back on the sofa with the tap in his mouth. Then he issues the strictest orders

to his s'hervant on no account to tur'hurn the tap, until he hears a gur'hurgling noise in his throat. That shows he is full."

"*Quantum suff.*," remarked the judicial Rapax, "and following the virtuous example of Skittleton, I think, Pom, with your permission, I will— ?"

"Exaactly. Pray, gentlemen, punish the b'harrel. To revert to the subject of costumes, it involves a s'herious problem."

"Give it a name!" burst from the lips of all present.

"Quite so. A c'hoice of profession is offered me. I can either go into the Ch'urch or the G'huards."

"An *embaras de richesses*," smirked Mr. Temperly.

"If it's a matter of grub," put in Mr. Rapax.

"D'haw!" interrupted Mr. Pompone. "You've none of you hit the right nail on the head. It's a simple question of which u—h'uniform suits me best!"

"Which!" echoed Mr. Bumpus in amazement.

"You see," continued Mr. Pompone, with a gravity unconsciously comic, "the doose of the Household Cavalry is that the privates look so superh'erlative as almost—haw—to eclipse their officers. Now in the Ch'urch

a ch'hasuble is d'haw—impressive, becoming, that s'orh'ort of thing."

"All very fine," objected Mr. Temperley, "but in the Army you don't enlist for everlasting, whereas in the Church——"

"There's always the alternative of the oratory," suggested Mr. Bumpus.

"Or," laughed Mr. Temperley, "the Baptist Chapel. You would look quite too in a bathing costume, Pom. The Baptist young female——"

"D'haw, Temperley, we must draw a veil somewhere. But we are digressing. (Don't laugh, Temperly! a man's future cannot be regarded as quite ridihiculous). As I was about to remark, Orphrey is going to raffle a lot of rhitualistic vestments. I have put in, and if any of you fellows win a ch'hasuble, I'll ask for the privilege of pre-emption."

"By all means," laughed Mr. Bumpus. "But, I say, Pom, what the blazes do you want with a chasuble?"

"D'haw! Bumpus, try a nip from that b'harrel."

* * *

For Mr. Orphrey's raffle, in spite of advertising, canvassing, and the superhuman exertions of Mr. Dens Reredos, but one hundred and forty-nine tickets out of

five hundred were subscribed. Nevertheless, inasmuch as a payment on account would stay the wolfish appetite of importunate creditors, it was deemed advisable not to return the coin subscribed, and to run the risk of losing a thousand pounds worth of ecclesiastical art in preference to a judgment in the vice-chancellor's court. True, Mr. Orphrey groaned in spirit. The thought of parting with a single toy involved exquisite pain. Yet might he have consoled himself with the reflection, that he held three hundred and fifty-one chances against one hundred and forty-nine. By all the rules of luck he ought to win two-thirds of the prizes. Still, let it be admitted, a tombola is a skittish thing, and utterly unreliable.

The tombola did not altogether misbehave—indeed, his tickets won a good two-thirds. One reverse, none the less, cut his mediæval soul to the quick. He failed to secure a single chasuble. Even the salvage of a gorgeous thing in copes could not be regarded as a set off to this mishap, for as a sort of climax of misadventure, an embroidered chasuble from a Belgian convent, imported by him direct, and actually paid for, fell to Erastian Mr. Rapax. Mr. Orphrey's outraged sensibilities thereupon

oozed lachrymosely. With tears in his pipey voice he blasphemed Dame Fortune. Jigger, of Christ Church, could not have mourned more plaintively the loss of his champion badger, which had earned several hundreds in honest wagers, mortally wounded a number of dogs, and over and above covering its owner with glory, had removed a small fraction of his fore-arm.

"Hullo! R'hapax," exclaimed the *basso expressivo* of Mr. Pompone. "I congrahatulate you. Take a tenner for that work of art?"

"Reredos says it's worth thirty at least."

"I'll spring to fifteen, and throw in a 'Mitre' dinner. None of your chops and stodge, but the entire *gourmand* trick—turtle, neck of venison, ortolan, and a marrow-bone to top up with. Drinks *ad lib.*, and a free billiard table. What do you say?"

Mr. Rapax *did* smile.

From henceforth the question in everybody's mouth was, "What will he do with it?" If you met twenty men in the brief space of half-an-hour, after the usual growl about the barometer, there followed at once the stereoed inquiry, "Can you tell me what Pompone's little game with that

chasuble is ?" Whereunto you could only respond that you give it up.

At length the great Pompone condescended to suggest a possible solution of the riddle underlying the following formula :

Mr. Pompone requests the honour of your company on Wednesday next at 8.30 *p.m. in the Holywell Rooms. Charades—Dancing.*

This pasteboard to the initiated was supremely satisfying. Old Pom, endowed with the bearing of a grenadier and the fortune of a brewer, apart from his undeniable good looks, had got to be regarded as an eligible *parti* by mammas, and a joy for ever by their daughters. A roomful amounted to a certainty in advance. Moreover, whatever he did was thorough. It had never been his custom to offer his fellow Christians the equivocal vintages of Rotgutesheimer. He would have voted it barefaced barbarity to invite even the primmest of his acquaintances to what are termed "light refreshments," *e.g.*, sawdusty sandwiches and sour negus. Heartily did he desire his guests, if they came in as lambs, to go out as lions, to advance by imperceptible stages from dwarfs into giants, and then further into giants refreshed with wine.

Yet—to drop a corner of one's veil—this sudden gush of colossal hospitality must not be referred to the bright eyes, waxen epidermis, and flowing locks of Oxonian maidenhood. There existed a strong motive power in the background, to wit, a buxom mamma, and a brace of seraphic daughters —Miss Dody and Miss Lulu, who had covenanted to grace the affair, and for whose sake it had been engineered. There may have been a method in Mr. Pompone's madness, and a very large-hearted, beneficent and agreeable style of madness it was, one too which might serve as a pattern for society. The junior tutor, who boasted himself a sort of Röntgen ray of undergraduate character, styled the great Pom *megaloprepes*, a word which, for those unacquainted with the jargon of Aristotle, may be translated top-sawyer.

No doubt about it. If, for instance, the regulation tea and coffee greeted the ladies at their entrance, in a side room, where the band were resining their bows and moistening their lips, could be discovered all sorts of cheering liquids for the thirstified male. A clever scout—mayhap the ever faithful Jommas—buttonholed every swallow-tail, detached it from its parasitical petticoats, and despatched it rejoicing to that glory-

hole of Evius, from which it emerged shortly, or longly, according to taste, radiant. As for the musicianers, they got so very pleasant before a chord was sounded, as to exhibit symptoms of leap-frog and bear-fighting, until checked by a single "exaactly" from the deep pedal pipes of their too liberal host, a note of which reduced the lot promptly to their normal level of catgut and brass.

These preliminaries settled, and the pretty company to a petticoat being in evidence, a charade was announced, and Mr. Pompone, leaving Mr. Temperly to do the Beau Nash vicariously in his absence, disappeared; then within a few minutes the band brayed the evergreen overture to *Masaniello*, and all eyes were focussed on the stage.

The dressing-up did not occupy long; indeed, at the end of the overture up went the curtain, disclosing Mr. Pompone in the resplendent uniform of a private in the Life Guards, pacing up and down, sentry-wise, as one to the manner born.

To him entered a little ragged urchin—a *gamin* of the pavement—one of the choristers of St. Swithin's—whereupon the band struck up the air of a ditty composed for the occasion by Mr. Pompone himself, "O, were I on the mountain top," which the

boy trolled forth with all the *aplomb* and *sang froid* of a practised soloist, exacting in return that homage a boy singer can always command from women, who would give their best gown for his quantity and quality of voice, his time and tune, his capacity to read at sight. Applause slowing down, after a loud burst, the ragged songster, assuming the impudent air of the gutter, inquired "how it feels a-top of all that padding?" on which sample of sauce the curtain fell, and the band, to give ample time for a change of scene, struck up a set of quadrilles.

The obvious disposition of properties behind the curtain, involving much pushing and shoving, aroused general curiosity. Mr. Temperly, moreover, hinted in an expressive *sotto voce* that a surprise might be in store. The washy quadrillishness of the fiddles filled up the interval, to be succeeded by Mendelssohn's "Wedding March," to the crash whereof the curtain rose upon an impressive *tableau*.

By levying a general contribution on Mr. Orphrey's ecclesiastical properties, scattered throughout the 'Varsity, Mr. Pompone had contrived to fit up a gorgeous and strictly correct altar, with flowers, candles, incense,

and all the regulation accessories. In front thereof—a cavalry moustache being decidedly incongruous—posed the great Pompone in person, disguised as a priest in alb, chasuble, etc., etc. Before him knelt a bridegroom, in fact, Mr. Bumpus, by his side the aforesaid chorister in the wedding robe of a bride, looking very pretty indeed. Other choristers habited as bridesmaids, lent an air of realism, while a brace of boys in lace and scarlet, and a thurifer swinging a censer so vehemently as to risk a general conflagration, made up the scene. Then the priestly Pompone, keeping his countenance by a superhuman effort, placed the hand of Mr. Bumpus in that of the ladylike chorister, and raised in episcopal style a brace of fingers in the air, intended to symbolise a benediction of the happy couple; but rather suggestive of the act of hailing a distant hansom.

After which to an unaccompanied mottet, the curtain fell.

"What can the word be?" gasped the fattish mamma of Mdlles. Dody and Lulu.

"I should guess 'Guardsman,'" remarked Miss Dody.

"I can understand 'Guard,'" retorted Miss Lulu, "but why 'man?' Surely at

a wedding the man is a very secondary consideration ?"

"Hush, my dear," frowned mamma. "Such a statement may be true, but to utter it outside the family circle would not be good breeding."

"Why ?" exclaimed Miss Dody, as the band, which had been frivolling with popular airs, suddenly pulled up sharp in the middle of "For he's a jolly good fellow." "Why — if — yes — how very, very—"

Well might a little tongue stutter. Alone on the stage stood the great Pompone, in ordinary evening dress, but with his cranium bearing the weight of a gigantic *chevelure* of bright red hair. Then signalling to the orchestra with a solemnity most portentous he began a breakdown. It was as though Madgalen Tower, or the elephant in the Zoo, were indulging in a *tour de force*. Supremely, vulgarly, silly—almost too idiotic to be laughed at—but, well, Mr. Pompone was in his first youth. He could but remark the look of compassionate disgust on Miss Dody's face. However, in for a penny, in for a pound ! With infinite exercitation of a pair of long legs, he set to work in good earnest. Dust flew out of the boards, which creaked to his stamp ; he perspired,

jumped, rocked, canted, until at last the hair pins that kept the *chevelure* of ginger hair on his head, giving way, this singular ornament rolled off, and the curtain fell with a flop.

"It can't be 'Guardsman!'" muttered Miss Dody.

"I'll tell you what it is, Dody," said her sister, glancing mischievously at that young lady's *coiffure*, which might have been less demonstrative without violating any known rule of good taste.

"Whisper it, Lulu."

"It's 'Topknot,'" she hissed. "Rather a broad hint, considering company present."

"I wonder how—?" but Miss Dody paused just in time not to give herself away.

Miss Lulu had rightly guessed the word, and perhaps if Mr. Pompone had not at that moment turned on a delicious tap of sparkling fluids, more than one woman in the room would have considered "topknot" a backhander directed at herself. However, as Horace remarked, concerning a steady flow of his favourite Falernian, after the wine is in, *quis crepat? Quis* indeed!

Now came the business of the evening. A posse of muscular undergrads cleared the decks. Dowagers were promptly reduced to sedentary whistiness, while the few of the

contingent who believed that pasteboard devices are the devil's pictures, huddled together to piously tear their neighbours' characters into little bits.

Leaving them to their devices, we may remark, that with the inspiriting strains of Strauss and Gung'l, the light fantastic toe was brought easily into accord. The old room where, under the style "Ancient Concerts," Handel's rhythmical ponderosities were wont to be performed under the direction of Hayes and Crotch, grew mazier and mazier. As for the girls' spirits, they rose to exaltation. The evening was voted the jolliest of the jolly. One wall-flower alone looked out of tune with everything. Mr. Rapax could eat, drink, smoke, chaff; but, like the tenth, he did not waltz. Not that he felt unhappy. Three suppers amply consoled a contented mind, which, we are told on high authority, is a continual feast.

To him, as he sat blinking, advanced his friend Temperly, radiant, with lovely Miss Lulu on his arm. "Say, Rapax, now at last we know why Pom coveted the chasuble you won."

"It's all right," yawned Mr. Rapax, "Pom paid up, and stood a royal feed at 'The Mitre.' Thank the pigs, for once in my life, I ate too much!"

These wiseacres, however, had only got hold of the lesser half of the story, as will appear from the sequel.

Miss Dody had been jerked round and round by Mr. Pompone, who was by no means a sympathetic partner, and were sitting out the Lancers. Either his persuasive tongue, or the excellence of his fluids had smoothed the frown from her face, and when his eyes sought hers they were met responsively. This emboldened a not very bashful gentleman in the direction of utterance.

"D'haw!" he began in his softest tone, "Which u'h'uniform do you consider, Miss Dody, the more becoming—the Guards or the C'hurch?"

Miss Dody dropped her eyes with artful artlessness.

"The 'Guardsman,'" she whispered, and surely no whisper was ever so alluring? "I thought very grand, and—and—it suited your height, Mr. Pompone; but the chasuble was simply lovely!"

"Exaactly," responded her partner with superb dignity. "I did think of the G'huards; but that settles the matter. *I shall go into the Church!*"

Now you know the secret of the chasuble. Mr. Pompone aimed at being directed by

Miss Dody's infallibility in sumptuary questions. A fine fellow, and in a degree typical of a class, yet rising above it in an open candour, which disdained to conceal an exuberant vanity.

THE END

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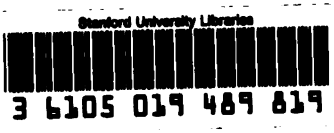

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